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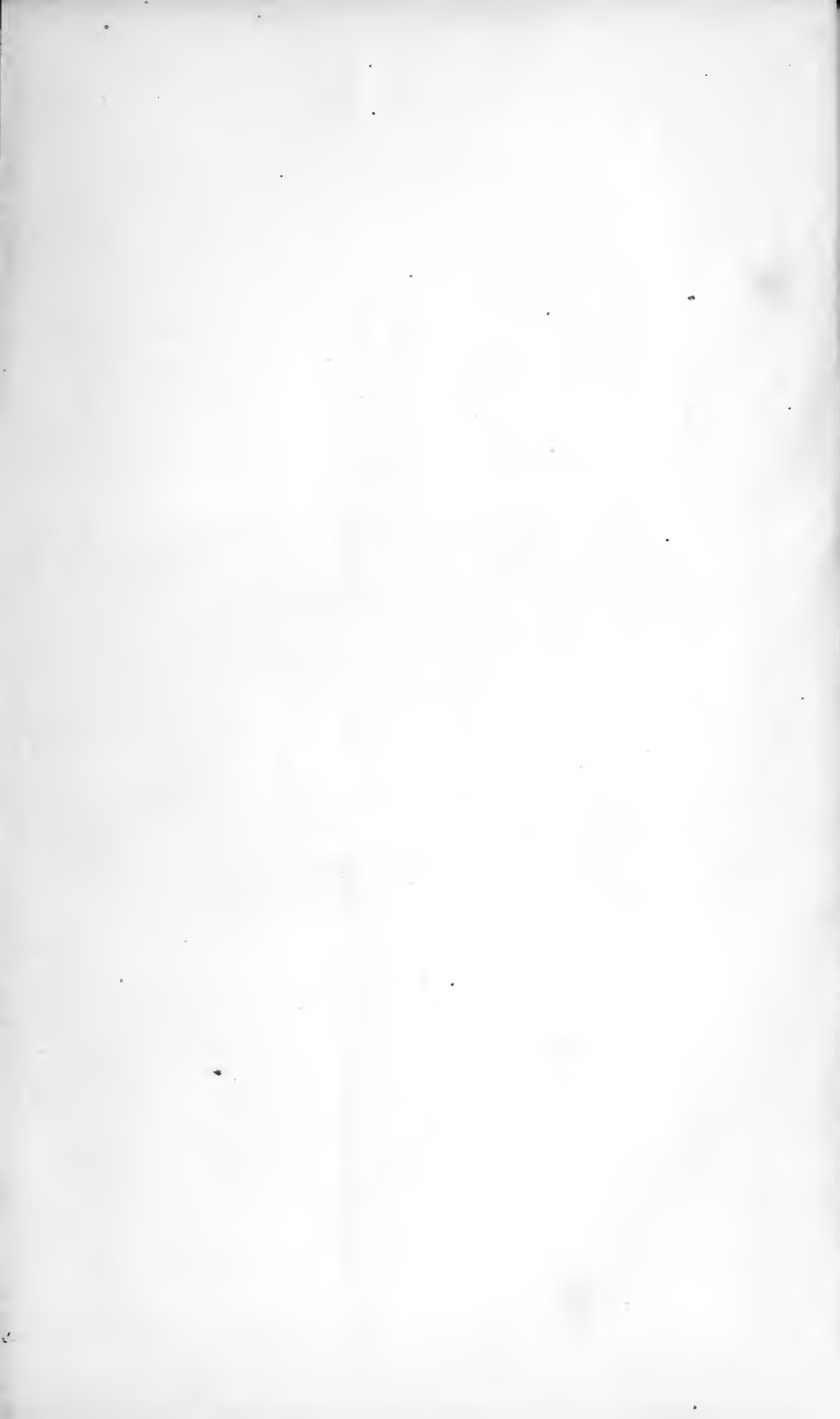
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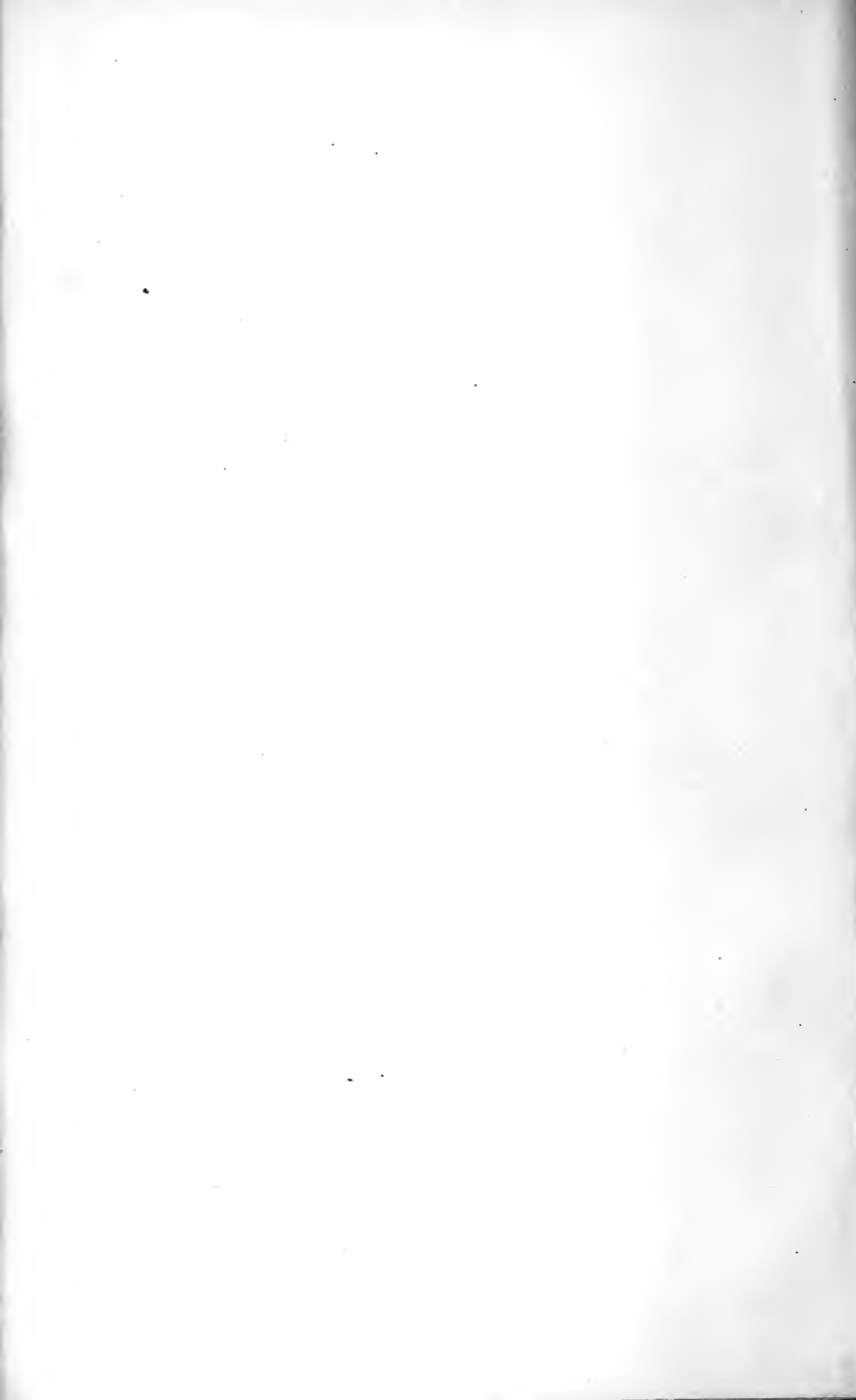
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7813, 1 vol. 2
138
ÆSTHETIC PIETY,

OR,
16mo Apr. 243.

THE BEAUTY AND LOVELINESS OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

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REV. WILLIAM BACON.



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PREFACE.

The aim of the following work is to persuade the impenitent to embrace religion, because of its inherent excellencies, and its consequent tendency to make them more happy *in the present life*. Yet they generally regard it as unlovely, disgraceful, and tending to make them more unhappy. The Author has, therefore, endeavored in the Introduction to show that these impressions of theirs result from the native corruption of their hearts, and from wrong views of true religion. And having thus prepared the way, I have endeavored in Chapter First to present the principal features of Christianity ; and to show that they are in themselves beautiful and noble, and tend to make their possessors more estimable and happy in the present life. And it is hoped that the classification and the distinguishing of the different christian graces, as here found, will be regarded as correct and useful to the *christian* reader. But, aware that many professing christians are too often wanting in many of these graces, and that sinners are much inclined to spy out their failures in this respect, I have in Chapter Second urged the followers of Christ to be more careful to exhibit to the world all the

duties and virtues of Christianity, (especially those which the unconverted are most apt to notice,) for the purpose of commending to them the way of salvation. Yet my chief aim has been to convince sinners in Chapter Third, that it is not only their duty, but for their highest interest in this world, as well as in the world to come, to consider and acknowledge all these excellencies of religion, to yield them their cordial approbation, and forthwith to adopt and practice them.

I have been led to attempt this treatise mainly by the belief that something of the kind is needed. For, I am not aware that any work occupying the same ground, sufficiently brief and direct for reaching the common mind, is now extant. I am aware that the one now offered to the public is much wanting in that charm and captivation of style which many so highly prize. I have relied chiefly upon the importance of its subject for catching and keeping the attention of the reader; and have sought principally to be so simple, definite and perspicuous, that I may be easily understood. And if this volume shall be the means of leading one sinner to salvation, its author will be amply rewarded.

INTRODUCTION.

WHY SINNERS REGARD RELIGION AS UN- AMIALE AND REPULSIVE.

In this work, we undertake to show, that the religion of the Bible is, of all things most excellent and lovely. And yet it is regarded by the most of men as very unsightly and forbidding. Preparatory to our work, then, we need to show, that this unfavorable opinion of theirs is unfounded, as it results from the perversion of their hearts by native depravity: consequently, whenever this depravity is removed by renewing grace, religion appears at once to them to be supremely beautiful and lovely.

That the native heart of man is thus corrupted and perverted, is evident from observation,

as well as from the declarations of the Word of God. It is seen in their native enmity to him. All the unregenerate must be conscious, on self-examination, that God is to them an unwelcome object of contemplation. And the more they reflect, the more conscious they will be, that he is one of positive aversion. They love not his attributes and character, because these are so contrary to their own. They hate his law—its commands, because they require of them duties which they are unwilling to perform—and its sanctions, because they denounce evil upon them for their past transgressions. And the more they reflect, the more conscious they will be, too, that they hate God, as the Disposer of their present and final destiny. They must see the language of their hearts to be, “We will not have this being reign over us.” And it is this generic aversion to God and his service which leads them to think, that his service, in all its affections and duties, is unlovely and repulsive. They pronounce it such, not because they have examined it speculatively, and come to a dispassionate and candid judgment to that effect ; but because they are conscious, that as they now are, the prac-

tice of this religion would be unwelcome and painful to them. It is only by associating it with the corrupt aversion of their own hearts, that they are deluded into the notion of its being in its nature devoid of excellence. If they were to consider it irrespective of their own obligations, and their own aversion to it, and as seen in others, they would come to a very different conclusion. And many have occasionally done so, pronouncing high encomiums on the christian conduct of others, while forgetful of their own obligation to "go and do likewise."

If, then, our race had not been corrupted by the fall, and all men had "served God with a perfect heart and a willing mind," they would have looked upon religion as their chief ornament. Accordingly, as soon as a man is born again, and thus is delivered in part from the bonds of his native corruption, he begins at once to "delight in the law of God, after the inward man," and consequently to love all the christian duties and graces which that law enjoins. What he regarded before, in God, in his people, and his service, with most aversion, he now looks upon as most excellent and lovely.

Let us give the above more expansion.

Native depravity misleads men, both by corrupting their moral tastes, and by warping their understanding. It corrupts the taste, mainly, perhaps, by vitiating the affections. For, as moral purity tends to refine and correct the taste, moral impurity must have the opposite effect. And it biases the judgment by its evil associations and habits, motives and errors, all of which it abundantly occasions. The minds of the unregenerate are misled in regard to the exercises and actions of religion in this way. When they contemplate them, they are conscious that the discharge of these duties would be very unpleasant to themselves. And thence they conclude that these duties are in their nature odious and forbidding. And the longer they are accustomed to associate this odium to religion, the more inveterate the notion becomes. No wonder, then, that so many assume it, as a self-evident fact, that all the exercises and duties of religion are the very opposite of beauty and loveliness. And yet, if these were to see a Christian discharging any one of the trying duties of religion, without reflecting that they themselves were bound to do the

same ; and especially if they were to find that this discharge of his duty were a vast benefit to *themselves*, they would warmly approve and loudly applaud his conduct.

Many profess to despise christian humility as a meanness of spirit, and to glory in their self-consequence. Yet they hate in another that pride which is the opposite of humility ; and are especially indignant at him, if he treats themselves with contempt or insolence. Some profess to despise christian meekness as pusillanimity, or want of proper spirit, and to honor revenge as magnanimity, or nobleness of spirit. But while they scorn to be meek and forbearing toward another, they think it very proper and very amiable in him to be meek and long-suffering under *their* injuries ; and that, if he should revenge these injuries, it would not be very becoming in him. Yet they seem not to consider, that what is base and dishonorable, or lovely and of good report in another, must, from its intrinsic nature, be equally so in themselves. And so it is in regard to many other christian graces. They applaud and prize them highly, when they are the profiting objects of them, while they would scorn to benefit others by doing the like holy duties.

The minds of some are far less perverted by depravity than others. Not a few have such clear views of the subject as constrain them to acknowledge, that the prohibitions and requirements of Christianity, are not only "holy and just," but "good;" and that all its duties and graces are becoming, honorable and lovely.—They are compelled, by the force of truth, to admit, that those who embrace and faithfully practice it, greatly improve their characters and welfare in life, and their prospects for the life to come. Still, however, they refuse to commence a life of godliness, and seem, strangely enough, to fear, that the spiritual beauties and excellencies that adorn and exalt others, would deform and disgrace themselves.

But others are loud in the praise of certain virtues, and severe in the censure of certain vices. And yet, it is because they are not aware, that what they profess so much to admire and love, are no other than *christian* graces; and that what they profess so much to condemn and hate are vices solemnly forbidden and severely threatened in the law of Christ. For, had they been aware of it, their inveterate prejudice against Christianity would have pre-

vented their expression of this praise and condemnation. But this shows more conclusively, that there is an inherent and commanding excellence in these virtues; for, otherwise the enemies of religion would not have been thus prompted to commend them. And let it be borne in mind, that there is not a single virtue which Christianity does not enjoin and promote, nor a single vice which it does not forbid and tend to restrain.

But many there be who profess to despise the Christian for his religious course. Yet, with not a few, it is profession only. For while they pretend to scorn their conduct, they only hate him for those holy examples by which he condemns them for not having the like christian graces. By tongue they revile, while in heart they must revere him. But others despise the christian graces, because they mistake the temper and motives by which they are prompted. It is so emphatically as to submission and meekness, patience and forgiveness. They attribute them to indolence or timidity, or to the want of proper energy, resolution or spirit. And it may be, that what are sometimes called by these names do thus originate. But

real *christian* graces arise from christian principles. The real saint is submissive and meek, patient and forgiving; not because he is destitute of energy or courage, but because God commands him, and the nature of the case makes it proper for him to be so. And the discharge of such duties often calls into requisition the utmost energy, courage and goodwill. Energy is needed to repress his own anger and resentment. And if "he that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city," how noble are his efforts to repress his rising passions. His courage is called out in facing a false public sentiment. And it often requires more moral heroism to "pocket" than to revenge an insult—more to decline than to accept a challenge—more to bear the stigma of an insult in being called a coward, than to wipe out the stain in the blood of the offender. And the love of good will is called into its utmost exercise, in sparing offenders out of regard to their own welfare.

Others, again, insist that certain christian duties are unlovely and revolting, because they require of us so much self-denial, toil and pain.

But such duties will be found to be very excellent and desirable, because they are so useful to others, if not to ourselves. And what is "good and profitable unto men," should always be loved and highly esteemed. Indeed, it is thought, that the idea of beauty originates in usefulness. And certainly, the more men wisely deny and exert themselves for the purpose of doing good, the more they should be honored and loved. Who should not esteem a man the more, if he makes vigorous and painful efforts to secure some important advancement, even of his own welfare? How much more, if he does it for the welfare of his family and friends? How much more still, if he does it for the good of society? And most of all is he applauded, who encounters distress, disease and danger in defence of his country. Why, then, should not *he* be honored and beloved, whose self-denials and sorrows, toils and trials are endured, not only to secure his own highest interest, both in time and eternity, but to promote the glory of God, the extension of his kingdom, and the salvation of his fellow men.

There are some, also, who insist that religion is unfavorable to learning and refinement. They

affect, therefore, to despise the pious, as an ignorant and coarse set of men. Nor is it to be denied, that some religionists decry learning, and glory in their lack of it. But these are far from being the true representatives of religion. There is far more general knowledge, and sound learning—nay, far more deep science among Christians, in proportion to their number, than among others. There is nothing in the teachings or influence of Christianity to restrain men from useful studies. On the contrary, there is much in its spirit and precepts that prompts to the pursuit of them. That “ignorance is the mother of devotion,” may be a dogma of Popery, but not of the religion of the Bible. True Christianity teaches the reverse of this. It teaches that “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.”—Ps. 111: 10. That “wise men, (that is, the pious,) lay up knowledge.” Also, “that the soul be without knowledge is not good.”—Prov. 10: 14; 19: 2. And all saints are required to “add to their faith virtue, and to virtue *knowledge*.”—2 Pet. 1: 5; and to grow alike in knowledge or in grace—3: 18. It teaches, it is true, that we should study first of all the truths of God’s Word. But it is only

because this is the most important department of knowledge. Yet it requires us, along with this, to learn all we can (consistently with other duties) of God's works and laws, both in the material and in the moral world. For the more we study them aright, the more we shall see of his wisdom and goodness; and thus the better we shall be prepared to serve him, and to promote our own welfare, as well as that of our fellow men. Nor are there many truths in the whole field of knowledge that cannot be made useful in the upbuilding of the kingdom of Christ in the world.

And that true religion promotes refinement, is evident from the fact that the most squalid, coarse, and debased, are found mainly among the most vicious and ungodly; and that when any one of them is converted, he is more elevated and refined by means of his piety. Dr. Chalmers used to speak of a worthy clergyman in Scotland, as a striking illustration of "the power of religion to make a gentleman out of a plowman." Christianity opposes, it is true, much which some call refinement. All excessive mincing, and squeamish and extravagant regard to dress and manners it condemns as

unmanly, and beneath the dignity of "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty." But its command is, "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."—Phil. 4 : 8 ; that is, give attention for the purpose of *attaining* them. And it is most manifest that the purity of heart which the Gospel enjoins, must tend to refine the manners of those who possess it. "If the inside of the cup or platter be clean, the outside must be clean also."

And others object that Christianity tends to repress and dwarf the domestic, social, and patriotic affections. But such is not the fact. It does, indeed, awaken a much stronger affection than any of these, the all-constraining love of Christ. But although this should cast all other affections, by comparison, into the shade, it does not hinder their exercise or growth. It rather promotes them. It purifies them, and intensifies them. Grace inspires the Christian with a strong desire for the temporal and

spiritual welfare of the whole human family. It will be seen, therefore, that he feels more desire for the good of his kindred and his kind, than he did before his conversion. Consequently, "religion makes better husbands and wives, better parents and children, better companions and neighbors, better rulers and subjects."

Christ does indeed say, "If any man come to me and *hate* not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple."—Luke 14 : 26. But every one must see that this passage is not to be understood *literally*, since the Bible elsewhere requires us to *love* all these objects. It is only a strong figure of speech, in which Christ teaches us, *not* that we should positively *hate them*, but that we should *love Him* so much more than these, that we should be willing to give them up, rather than to give up Him and His salvation. And certainly there is nothing unreasonable or unamiable in the requirement, that we should love most, what is of most value.

When the social affections are exercised by the unregenerate, they are apt to be mixed

with much sensuality and selfishness. Self-gratification makes a great share of their domestic and social love ; while self-interest and party spirit make a great share of what they call patriotism. But the effect of Divine truth is to detect, and of Divine grace to remove, these impurities. Thus it is, that religion *purifies* these affections. But how, it may be asked, does it intensify them ? One way, I think, is by removing their obstructions, the chief of which are selfishness and malignant passions. Though selfishness mingles much with the social affections, and often seems to be a "part and parcel of them," yet when excessive, it is at war with them. The more a man loves his money, the less will he love his kindred and his country. So the more he is absorbed in amusements and pleasures, the less time and disposition he has for indulging in the social affections. And so it is with those also, who are excessively eager for the distinctions and honors of the world. How can domestic love, friendship or patriotism, find room in a heart whose all-absorbing passion is avarice, sensuality or ambition. Yet much more is malignity at war with these affections. How can a man

have the love of his fellow men in full exercise, while indulging an impatient, querulous, angry or malicious spirit? The two are entirely incompatible. Religion, then, by removing these obstructions, permits the social affections to be more intense and active.

Moreover, the renewing grace of God brings a new element into the social system. It is a disinterested love to all moral beings, such a love as no one has before he is born again. The grace of God replaces selfishness with benevolence, and malignity with good will. In the dark system of native depravity, supreme selfishness is the central orb. Avarice, sensuality and ambition are the greater planets that revolve around it. And each of these has its satellites of pride, envy, jealousy, resentment, and the like. The greater a man's selfishness, the greater will be his "lust of the eye," his "lust of the flesh," or his "pride of life," consequently the more he will despise others, if he is successful. But if not successful, the more he will envy those who *are*, and hate those whom he suspects of standing in the way of his cherished aspirations. And as sanctifying grace not only dispels from the

heart these evil influences, but sheds abroad in their stead the spirit of good will toward all moral beings, it must vastly augment the social affections. For this good will radiates without limits in every direction. Consequently like the sun, it shines most on the largest and nearest bodies. And as God is the greatest of all objects, he will have the greatest share of its light, while others will share in proportion to their importance or proximity in the domestic or social connections. Even the remotest object will receive some portion of its benevolent regard.

The Christian loves all mankind, as he did not before his conversion; and not only by virtue of the spirit of benevolence which the Holy Ghost has breathed into him, but also out of regard to the command to "love his neighbor as himself." And he will act out his love in doing good to all as he has opportunity. He will now love all men the more, because he now regards them as the offspring and family of one common Father, whom he loves supremely. Yet he will love those most with whom he is most intimately connected by christian or domestic ties, according to the

spirit of the apostle's declaration, that "if any provide not for his own, and especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."—1 Tim. 5: 8. And his public spirit and patriotism will also be purer and stronger than before. Formerly, he wished well to the community and to the country, mainly because his own welfare was connected with them. But now he is less selfish. Aside from his own interest, he feels an ardent love of good will toward all with whom he is united, by social or political bonds. "A christian spirit without public spirit is simply absurd."—*Bushnell*. Formerly, too, he cared little or nothing for the welfare of other lands. But now he ardently desires the individual, political and spiritual prosperity of the whole human brotherhood. He is what he was not before, *a genuine philanthropist*, desiring that salvation, the highest human good, may come to all mankind.

Thus we think we have shown the fallacy of the notion, that religion is unsightly and unamiable, showing that it results primarily from native depravity, which corrupts the taste and perverts the judgment,—that many revile re-

ligion simply because they hate to practice it—that many christian virtues are so evidently lovely and beautiful, that some sinners are compelled to admit it, while others deny it against their own consciousness—that some applaud the christian virtues, supposing that they do not belong to the christian system, while others revile certain graces as weakness, because they are not aware of the magnanimity from which they result—that some object to certain duties, because they require so much self-denial, toil and pain, yet, that as these duties are so beneficial to the agent or others, they are to be the more applauded on account of their cost—that others object to religion, as unfavorable to learning and refinement, while it is evident, on the contrary, that it has an opposite tendency—and that still others object to it as tending to repress the domestic, social, and patriotic affections, while it evidently tends vastly to promote and to strengthen them. The foregoing remarks have been made preliminary to the main subject of this work, and for the sole purpose of preparing the reader to profit by the perusal of it. And the object of the work is to persuade saints to

grow in grace, and sinners to seek salvation. If, then, the reader has been as fully convinced by these remarks, as we think he ought, that all his past aversion of heart to the religion of the gospel is wrong, and all his past objections against it are unfounded, it will be easy to convince him that the exercise and practice of this religion would greatly promote his respectability and happiness on earth. And if many a Christian were suitably imbued with the conviction of the beauty and loveliness of this religion, they would strive much more to abound in its excellencies, thus adding greatly to their welfare here, and their reward hereafter. But what is better, they would contribute far more to the salvation of sinners, by exemplifying before them the excellency and worth of that godliness which alone can secure them eternal life. So if sinners were as fully convinced of religious beauty and loveliness, as they certainly would be, did they but see how unreasonable are their hatred and prejudice against it, the less would they be inclined to delay repentance till it would be eternally too late.

In the following treatment of our subject, we propose to show—

1. That the christian religion is essentially beautiful and lovely.

2. That Christians should strive as much as possible, both to attain and to exhibit all the excellencies of this religion. And

3. That sinners as well as saints should candidly examine, and correctly estimate, the duties and graces of Christianity, and thence be led to adopt and practice them, in order to secure all the happiness to which they lead.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION SHOWN TO BE BEAUTIFUL AND LOVELY.

The excellencies of this religion might be proved in very brief and summary ways. In the first place we might show, that as the character of God is infinitely amiable and glorious, and as religion or godliness consists mainly in copying all his imitable perfections, its excellencies must be transcendent. Or we might show, that as God delights in all the pious conduct and affections of his people, they must of necessity be excellent ; for he is too good and too wise, to love what is neither amiable or praiseworthy. But it is not our purpose to urge these abstract arguments. We propose rather to present the reader with the principal features of Christianity, that he may judge for himself of their beauty and loveliness.

The christian religion may be considered, in the general, as that system of doctrines and duties which are taught in the Bible. But our attention will now be mainly directed to its *duties*, comprising both internal affections and external actions. God's commands are both prohibitory and mandatory. It is, therefore, as much our duty to abstain from what he forbids, as to do what he enjoins. And religion is as "holy, just and good," in forbidding all wrong affections and conduct, as in requiring every right exercise and action. It must, therefore, secure the approbation and praise of all intelligent and candid minds, in that it forbids all the selfish and malignant passions, all sloth and sensuality, all self-righteousness and pride, all censoriousness and slander, all falsehood and dishonesty, all oppression and cruelty, and in short, all that is wrong. And as there is no moral evil which it does not prohibit, it should be highly esteemed and loved for *this*, though it had no other excellence. For if all these prohibitions were duly heeded by all men, there is no calculating how much the welfare of the human family would be thereby promoted.

But equally great should be the estimation and love of this religion, on account of its *positive requirements*. As it requires us to be diligent in all our employment, patient under all our sufferings, thankful for all our enjoyments, kind and courteous to all men, piteous and merciful to the afflicted, forgiving and beneficent, even to our enemies, true in all our words, just and punctual in all our dealings—in short, as it requires us to do *all we ought*, for God's glory, for our own welfare, and for that of our fellow men, what considerate mind cannot see that it is worthy of the utmost praise and love? All these duties are included, as Christ has told us, in the two brief commandments of the law, to love God with all the heart, and our neighbor as ourselves.—Considered, then, as a system of duties which God requires of us, religion must appear most beautiful and lovely.

But we propose to prove its excellence by pointing the reader to particular graces, as they are exemplified in the lives of the holy. It is granted, however, that these graces do not shine out in all their needed fulness, in the lives of all the people of God. For all of

them are imperfect, and many are sadly so.— Yet whatever christian virtues they do display, are in themselves just as excellent, as if they were not deficient in regard to others. And besides, we are furnished with examples of One which are perfect in all respects. They are the examples of “Jesus of Nazareth.” He, though “very God,” was as really man, having both a human body and a human soul. And in assuming human nature, He assumed all its obligations, obligations which He perfectly fulfilled. “He did always those things which pleased His Father.” “He knew no sin.” “He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” All He said and did is not recorded, yet enough is recorded to make His life a perfect example, or in the language of the artist, a *beau-ideal* of His religion, showing it to be one of perfect beauty and perfect loveliness. It is true, that Christ, while on earth, was hated and defamed as no other man ever was. But every candid mind must perceive, that instead of this, He ought to have been regarded as by Solomon, “the One altogether lovely.” Many modern infidels, who are bitterly opposed to salvation by His blood, are

therefore constrained to acknowledge that His character and teachings, as given by the evangelists, possess surpassing excellence. And such excellence should win us all to His person, and to that religion of which He was a perfect embodiment.

But we hasten to the main purpose of this chapter, which is to present the principal features of Christianity *apart*, that having examined them separately, the reader can judge the better of it as a whole. We have no occasion to scrutinize all its graces and virtues. It will be sufficient to examine the most important of them, especially those whose beauty and loveliness are most frequently called in question. And the one that demands our first attention, is

CONSCIENTIOUS EXACTNESS IN DUTY.

Many profess to regard all such preciseness as indicative of a narrow mind. But it is just such exactness as God requires, just such as abounds most in the best of saints, and just such as is essential to complete moral character. If self-righteousness were the object of this exactitude, (as it is with too many,) it would

indeed be void of loveliness, being prompted by an odious pride and selfishness. But true conscientiousness is regard only to right principle. And the man whose sensibilities are so perverted or blunted as not to regard what are called *little sins*, will be proportionably regardless of larger ones. Christ therefore says, "He that is faithful in that which is *least*, is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much."—Luke 16: 10. Many who claim to be moral, are in the habit of making small encroachments on the rights of others, and seem to think it a matter of no consequence. Accordingly, they not unfrequently reproach those whom they have thus injured, as mean in complaining of such little wrongs. Whereas, if it be mean to *complain* of such injuries, it is much meaner to *commit* them; and meaner still to commit them, as many do, because they hope the injured parties will be so magnanimous as not to resent such injuries. It is a true, as well as a common saying, that "life is made up of little things." And little things have often a vast influence on human welfare. A slight insult or mortification may trouble a man long and

severely. Taking and withholding a little money from him, may prevent his fulfilling his engagements, and thus eventuate in a great loss, nay, in his complete financial ruin. A little fright or a light blow may issue in mania or death. Yet, though they should not thus eventuate, the infliction of them is no trivial sin. And every considerate mind must see that there is a peculiar loveliness and beauty in that moral delicacy which shrinks from the smallest injury to others. In this, man is like his Maker, great in the *minute*, as well as in the *magnificent*.

But if it is base to offend in little things against *man*, how much more so, to offend thus against the Most High. And if a delicate and scrupulous regard to the rights of man is lovely and noble, how much more so is the like regard to the infinitely higher claims of the "Lord of all," since he is as far above his creatures, as are the heavens above the earth. Nor is there, in fact, any such thing as a *little sin*.

The line of demarcation between right and wrong is one of infinite moment. He, then, that dares to cross it in anything, commits a great offence. For, "Sin is the transgression

of the law"—1 John 3 : 4, and he who commits it, contemns the majesty, and defies the vengeance of its Infinite Author. And he who ventures to pass this Rubicon between right and wrong, will find, thereby, the less obstruction in his way to greater sins. If, then, we would be more safe from sin, and would grow more in grace, we should cultivate that delicate sensibility of conscience, which shrinks from approaching the least transgression. For the more insensible our hearts are to evil, the more easily we are tempted to commit it. Conscientiousness is the more excellent, then, in that it is not only lovely in itself, but is a powerful guard against all transgressions. Much as some may hate to have it in exercise, much as they may pretend to despise it in others, they cannot do it with an honest heart. For they cannot but see that it were well for them, and for society at large, if all others were thus conscientious. How safe would be their interests, and the interests of all, and what a happy world this would be, if this grace were possessed and practiced by every one ?

CHRISTIAN FIRMNESS AND COURAGE.

Christian firmness is a fixed, unwavering determination to do what is right. It is sometimes called *an iron will*, and rightly so, when that expression is used in a good sense. But *willfulness* and stubbornness are used in a bad sense, to mean a dogged perseverance in opinions and purposes, be they right or wrong. And it originates mainly from pride of opinion, party spirit, or love of evil. It is, therefore, well considered as a very unlovely and reprehensible spirit. But *christian firmness* is regard to christian principle, and is a fixedness only in regard to what is right. Nor can there be any doubt in candid, considerate minds, that this is a very amiable and excellent grace. What can be more evidently noble and amiable than a full, invariable purpose to do what is right? Neither can it be doubted that it is a *christian* virtue, when the main influence of grace upon the heart is to originate, continue and increase this purpose.

Christian courage is *daring* to do, in the face of danger, what ought to be done. This, too, is regard to christian principle. It is this which makes "the righteous bold as a lion,"

while "the wicked flee when no man pursueth."—Prov. 28 : 1. The saint's life is a warfare, in which he needs much of this courage, in order to act as a "good soldier of Jesus Christ." His enemies are numerous and powerful—enemies without and enemies within. The wicked on earth and all the host of hell are embattled against him. And although they cannot assail him with open violence, they do it in many other ways. Although they point not against him the pistol or the dirk, they often shoot at him the arrows of slander, and thrust him with the "sharp sword" of a reviling tongue. They strive in various ways to deter him from duty, by the fear of loss or shame. And sometimes it requires as much moral courage to withstand such attacks, as to meet the murderous weapon of a foe.

But *christian* courage is very different from that which the world so often and so loudly extol. The bravery upon which they are so lavish of applause, is a daring to deeds of cruelty and wrong. Duelists risk their life to avenge some alledged injury, or to defend, as they say, their injured reputation. But a man under the full influence of Christianity, would

rather die himself, than to take, needlessly and maliciously, the life of his enemy. And which is the most amiable and excellent? The forbearance and forgiveness of the Christian, or the revenge and bloodshed of the duelist? The former faces danger for the purpose of promoting God's glory, and man's welfare, while it is often the very opposite of this moral courage which leads the other to take the life of his fellow, and to fill many a mansion with sorrow. For he avows, in attempting to excuse his crime, that he fought out of fear of being called a coward, and thus shows that he incurred a far baser cowardice than that which he sought to avoid by blood. Such is his weak and dastardly fear of an unwise, wicked and atrocious public sentiment, that he prefers, rather than encounter it, to run the risk of losing his own life, or of taking the life of another. And how much more magnanimous is he, then, who does dare to face this sentiment, for the sake of doing *duty*. But it may be asked, "Is not the Christian actuated by fear, in so doing?" Yes, he fears God more than men, and the condemnation of his own conscience more than the deadly bullet or blade.

But this only the more ennobles him. Yet the crowning glory is, that he refuses to avenge his wrong, out of good will to the offender. For this is the very acme of grandeur in man's moral character. Even the devotees of the so called "code of honor," could not fail to see it such, if they considered it candidly. Though many of the impenitent pretend to despise the Christian for his firmness and fortitude in duty, calling him a weak fanatic, yet in their better judgment they honor him for it. And though they strive to deter him from it, they despise him, if he yield to them, charging him with weakness of principle, if not with hypocrisy.

CHRISTIAN ZEAL.

Zeal, in its widest sense, is an ardent earnestness in any pursuit. But all zeal is not good. Saul of Tarsus was zealous, he tells us, in persecuting the church. This grace, to be good, must have a good object. One purpose for which Christ died, was to make his people "zealous of good works."—Tit. 2 : 14. But it is not enough that the business in which zeal is exercised is right. Its spirit and motives should also be right. Some labor ardently to

promote the prosperity of the church, and yet in doing so are actuated partly, if not wholly, by a desire to advance their own personal or party aggrandizement. And so far as they are thus influenced, they are selfish and censurable. Sometimes zeal in religion becomes inflamed with ill-will, and thus far it becomes a culpable fanaticism. Such was once the fact with some of Christ's own disciples. James and John were for calling down fire from heaven to consume the Samaritans that did not receive him, thinking, no doubt, that they were manifesting a commendable zeal for their Master. "But he turned and rebuked them, and said, ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of."—Luke 9 : 53-5. True christian zeal should always be attended by the spirit of benevolence. And this good will is never more needed than in our efforts to correct the errors of others.

Zeal should, moreover, be proportioned to the importance of its object. The cause of Christ, then, demands its utmost intensity. And "It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing."—Gal. 4 : 18. But some things in religion are much more impor-

tant than others. How unwise that zeal, then, which wakes to its highest pitch, and wastes its chief energies on the mint and anise and cummin of Christianity, yet neglects the weightier matters of the law. And there is another way in which many err in this respect. Whether "charity should begin at home" or not, it is certain that *zeal* should begin there. Yet how many, who are ardently engaged in "pulling out the mote out of their brother's eye," are strangely forgetful of the beam in their own.

But the truly christian zeal which we are advocating, is an ardent earnestness in promoting the best of causes, in the best spirit, and from the best of motives. It must, therefore, commend itself to all enlightened and candid minds, as an eminently proper, becoming, and amiable grace. Yet many deride and condemn it as the height of enthusiasm. Nor would I object to the epithet; but only insist on its being used in its better and most appropriate meaning. It is indeed enthusiasm, just such an impression by the Holy Spirit as befits and adorns the followers of Christ. What can be more worthy of our love and applause, than

this ardent earnestness in seeking to promote the glory of God, and the highest good of man. The chief reason why many despise it is, that they utterly undervalue the cause in which it is displayed. If they considered religion to be, as it is, the highest interest, and the most important pursuit of man, they would see that zeal in it must be his best ornament, and his highest honor, and that a lack of it would be a culpable defect. And others are disgusted at true christian zeal, because they see, or think they see, that some professors are hypocritically affecting it. But why should they reject all genuine coin, on finding some that is spurious? If all bills were worthless, who would become counterfeiters?

LOVE TO GOD AND MAN.

Of this grace, there are two kinds that need our special attention. One is the love of *moral esteem*, the other is the love of *good will*. The former is an ardent approbation of character. It is love to an object, because of its good moral qualities. And as God is a being of infinite excellence, he should have our warmest affections. We are, therefore, com-

manded in the law to love him *with all our heart*. And this precept is declared by Christ, "the first and great commandment."—Matt. 22 : 38. But "the carnal mind is enmity against God."—Rom. 8 : 7. Nor do any love him till they are regenerated. Hence the apostle says, "Love is of God ; and every one that loveth, is born of God."—1 John 4 : 7. This, then, is a *christian* grace. And what can be more evidently proper, praiseworthy and amiable, than to love supremely what is infinitely lovely ? While on the other hand, how perverted must that heart be, that loves not the perfect character of God.

But "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of Him."—1 John 5 : 1. Those who delight in his holy image, will delight in it, even though but dimly reflected by his children. This is that "brotherly love" which is so often enjoined by Christ and his apostles. And no reflecting and candid mind can fail to see, that to love others as far as they resemble Him who is "altogether lovely," is highly proper and commendable. Yet many profess to be disgusted at the Christian's affectionate attachment to his illiterate

and uncouth brethren, while with signal inconsistency, they reproach him when he manifests a want of it. Nor is it the ignorance or the unsightly exterior which he loves in his fellow professors, but that image of Christ, which the Holy Spirit has implanted within them, as a diamond among coarse and worthless pebbles.

The other kind of love, we say, is that of *good will*. It is a spirit of benevolence toward all sentient beings. Some insist that this affection cannot be exercised toward God, because he is infinitely above the reach of our good wishes or works. But this superiority is no hindrance to our good desires. We feel good will toward many a man, who does not need our aid, or to whom we could not extend it if it were needed. And why can we not have the like good will towards God? Every Christian does, in fact, feel it, whenever he desires to please him, and to have his glory promoted. Nay, all that he does for the upbuilding of his kingdom, is done out of the love of good will to the Lord of all.

But it is in good will to *man* that this love is mostly manifested. And this is pre-eminently a *christian* virtue, being required by

the teachings, and promoted by the influence of Gospel grace. Religion, like its Author, is love; while irreligion, like *its* author, is malignity. And his children are by nature "hateful, and hating one another." Ardent domestic affection, and strong friendship, are often found among the impenitent. But even these are purified and increased by the influence of Christianity. By checking the selfishness, sensuality and malevolence of the natural man, religion does much to improve the domestic and social attachments. And if nature's love and friendship are comely and amiable, as all agree, how much more so when purified and increased by grace. But grace-born benevolence is the more to be estimated, as it extends more or less to all men, even to enemies.

Gratitude is usually thought to be a distinct kind of love. But strictly speaking, perhaps, it is a combination of the two just considered. It is the love of esteem toward another, because of the favors which in kindness he has bestowed, or has wished to bestow, upon us. For if we find he desires to bestow a favor, but is not able, we take the will for the deed, and feel the like thankfulness as if the kindness

had been actually done. Whereas, if we doubt his kind intentions, especially if we think he is prompted only by selfish or evil motives, such as to get a good name, to get a greater favor in return, to make us feel a painful sense of obligation, or to take some advantage of us, we can feel no gratitude. But we feel toward the benefactor, not only a love of moral esteem on account of his kindness to us, but a stronger desire to promote his welfare. There comes in the love of good will, quickened and increased by the kindness received. And grace has the same influence on these affections when thus combined, as when exercised apart. If, then, gratitude is a lovely virtue, when manifested by the people of the world, surely it is no less so, when, by Divine grace, it is more manifestly exercised by the people of God. And if thankfulness to man for his minor favors is lovely and commendable, how much more so the Christian's gratitude to God for his unspeakable gifts.

CHRISTIAN OBEDIENCE.

The virtues hitherto considered are *internal*, while obedience is the external action result-

ing from it. *Precise* obedience results from conscientiousness: obedience in *difficulty* and *danger* from moral firmness and courage: *earnest, energetic* obedience from zeal: and *all true* obedience from love to God and man. For said Christ, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. *On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*—Matt. 22: 37-40. And Paul said, “If there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself—therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.”—Rom. 13: 9, 10. The evident meaning of these declarations is, that proper love to God and man will prompt to the full discharge of all our duties to both. All these duties should be done in obedience to Divine authority. For we owe no duty to any one which God does not virtually command. When, therefore, children obey their parents, servants their masters, and subjects their rulers, they should be led to do it by the considera-

tion that God requires it of them. For the apostolic injunction is, "Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."—Col. 3 : 23. We should, therefore, obey many unreasonable and oppressive commands. Said Paul to those who were under the unrighteous and cruel government of Rome, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers—the powers that be are ordained of God."—Rom. 13 : 1. He sanctions wicked governments, because they are better than *none*. And while thus sanctioned, they ought to be obeyed. At least, there are but two conceivable cases in which they should be disobeyed. One is, when they require what God plainly and solemnly forbids. The other is, when there is a fair prospect that resistance would secure better laws. In all other cases, submission would be both our interest and our duty. For refusal would make not only our own condition, but that also of our fellow servants or fellow subjects, still worse. Many a slave at the South has rendered his own state, and that of his fellows, far worse by his disobedience and obstinacy, for he has made the master more severe. Whereas, if he had been obedient and

faithful, he would have secured so much of his master's confidence and favor, as would have made him more gentle and kind. And many an unsuccessful insurrection has but increased the burdens which it was intended to remove.

Is it not, then, most evident, that obedience to God is eminently proper, honorable and praiseworthy? As his "law is holy, and the commandment *holy*, and *just*, and good," is not obedience to it evidently most amiable and becoming? and is not resistance to it most *un*-amiable and *un*becoming? How can it be otherwise than lovely and honorable to do what is just and good? or unlovely and dishonorable to do what is wrong? What a beautiful and blessed world this would be, if the will of God were done by all on earth as it is done by angels in heaven? On the contrary, what a wretched, horrid world it would be, if all its inhabitants were to live in constant violation of its existing laws. And yet how many are scorning to submit to his authority, as if it were mean to obey, and manly to rebel. In good human governments, obedience is held in honor, while rebellion is detested. And why should it not be more so, in the perfectly

righteous and benevolent government of God? Many seem to be ashamed to obey God, supposing that obedience must result from the fear of his wrath, which fear they affect to believe is weak and disgraceful. Whereas, all submission to him should be prompted by love to his character, and the hope of his favor, rather than from a fear of his anger. Yet what if it did spring only from the dread of Divine indignation? How can it be more disgraceful to avoid, than to rush upon, such a danger? And wherein is it nobler to brave the eternal wrath of God, than the lightning, earthquake or tornado? How much wiser to avoid any dire calamity by doing right, than to expose ourselves to it by doing wrong.

Equally evident is it, that the obedience of children, servants and subjects is beautiful and lovely. The cheerfully obedient child is the object of admiration with all right minded people, while the froward and rebellious one is an object of aversion and hate. The same may be said of servants and subjects. And when their obedience is rendered out of regard to the commands, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right; servants, be

obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh—in singleness of your heart as unto Christ,”—Eph. 6 : 1, 5, and to the command to “obey magistrates,”—Tit. 3 : 1, it is much more worthy of approbation and praise. Nor is this obedience the less lovely, when yielded to unreasonable and tyrannical commands, but rather much more so. For it evinces much more consideration, self-denial, and self-control, as well as more regard to Divine authority, and to the welfare of others.

REPENTANCE.

But all men have failed to render to God the obedience that was due. “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”—Rom. 3 : 23. The next thing, therefore, that claims our attention, is their way of return to his service and favor. This, then, is the connection in which to consider the duty of repentance. Of this there are two kinds, expressed in the original in two different words, having entirely different meanings. The one signifies sorrow, or rather self-condemnation, for having failed to obey God. And as all have thus offended, all have occasion for such regret. But all such

repentance is satisfactory neither to God nor man ; for it is but “the sorrow of the world, which worketh death.”—2 Cor. 7 : 10. Mere remorse for sin is no more acceptable, when manifested by sinners on earth, than by the lost in hell. But beside this, there is a “godly sorrow,” or “sorrow after a godly sort.” It is a grief, not merely for what we ourselves suffer, or are in danger of suffering, on account of our sins, but a grief for the injury thus done to the honor and government of God, as well as to the welfare of our fellow men. And all candid ones must see that such a sorrow is perfectly becoming in every offender. Although the impenitent are apt to suppose that repentance would disgrace them, it is really the want of it that does so. In the first place, they disgrace themselves by the *commission* of sin. For the wisest of men has said, that “sin is a reproach to any people.”—Prov. 14 : 34. But after it is committed, there is no disgrace respecting it, except the want of proper feeling and purpose in regard to it. After the deed is done, the best thing that sinners can next do, is to exercise a suitable sorrow for it. This, in the premises, is also the most noble and praise-

worthy thing they can do. So they would themselves judge, respecting any one who had injured *them*. They would say, "If the man who has injured me would confess his wrong doing, show a sincere regret for it, and resolve never to repeat it, I should respect and forgive him. But as he avows no sorrow, and no purpose of amendment, and thereby indirectly justifies himself, virtually avowing an intention to continue the injury, his subsequent conduct is alike detestable as the original offence." But why is not this as true respecting their offences against God, as respecting this man's offence against them? If such sorrow were proper and noble in him who offends his fellow men, why not equally, or rather immensely more so, in them who have committed innumerable offences against the Most High God?

But the only penitence which is acceptable and availing with Jehovah, is called "repentance toward God,"—Acts 20: 21, and "repentance to salvation."—2 Cor. 7: 10. It consists not simply in "godly sorrow," but in a full and abiding resolution to forsake sin, and to live ever after in obedience to God, a resolution which this sorrow "worketh" in the penitent.

This grace is of infinite moment, as it is absolutely necessary to salvation. "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."—Luke 13: 3. It is also important, because the sinner could not be happy without it, though forgiven and received to heaven. If he were to cling to his sins, he must be wretched on earth, and more so in heaven. And as resolution must precede performance, he will never leave his sins till he fully determines to do so, that is, till he *repents*. And what is so infinitely needful and beneficial, cannot be in itself mean and degrading. Nor can it appear so to any but those whose minds are amazingly perverted. Whatever is great and good in its direct results, should be the approbation, the pleasure, and the admiration of all. How excellent that repentance, then, which leads from the abominations of sin, which delivers from "shame and everlasting contempt," and secures a "joy unspeakable and full of glory." How much, therefore, do those disgrace themselves, who refuse, through a most preposterous pride, to escape this evil, and secure this good. To be ashamed of repentance is their greatest disgrace.

CONFESSION OF SIN.

This duty is distinct from repentance, though in consequence of their intimate connection, they are often confounded. "Godly sorrow worketh" confession of sin, as invariably as it "worketh repentance to salvation." Consequently both have promise of pardon.—Rom. 10: 10; 1 John 1: 9. Yet they are as distinct from each other as they are from prayer, which also is the result of godly sorrow, having also the promise of salvation.—Rom. 10: 13. The object for which confession is enjoined, is not to bring hidden sins to light. Many such ought never to be divulged; for the knowledge of them would implicate others, and work mischief in many ways. None should be openly acknowledged but such as are known or suspected. Secret sins should be confessed only to Him "which seeth in secret." But it may be asked, "If confession be not for the purpose of making sins known, why is it required?" And we answer:

One reason is, that confession is needful to show that we have truly "sorrowed to repentance." As on the one hand, penitence is needful to show that our confessions are not a

mere pretense ; so, on the other hand, our confessions are needful to show that we are truly sorry for our sins. For what evidence can there be that we really regret an offence, if we refuse to acknowledge to the offended party that we have injured him ? Genuine godly sorrow will prompt us to confess all our offences against him, and these include all the injuries which we have done our fellow men. It will also prompt us to confess our *known* or *suspected sins* openly, so far as the honor of religion requires. And if our penitence be sufficiently deep, it will be difficult for us to keep from doing so. Confession would seem to be a relief to us.

But the chief reason for requiring confession is, that we make thereby some suitable amends for injury which our offence has done. Our sins can be *sufficiently* atoned for only by the blood of Christ. But some suitable atonement we can make by confession. Open iniquity dishonors God. It should, therefore, be openly confessed, that this dishonor may thereby be in part removed. So Achan was required to confess his sin, in order to "give glory to the Lord God of Israel." And so offending church

members are required to confess their offences before their brethren, that the reproach which they have brought upon the cause of Christ may thus in a measure be wiped away. So we judge of others in regard to the injuries which they do ourselves. We feel instinctively that they should confess them. And if they will not, we cannot be satisfied that they are really sorry for the wrongs they have done us. Nor can we feel that they have done all they should, to heal our wounded interest or honor, till they have made such acknowledgment.

Yet the main present question respecting this duty is, whether it is a base and degrading one? For many shrink from it, as if it were very humiliating and disgraceful to confess past errors. But as we have said respecting repentance, we say respecting *confession*, that all the disgrace is in *committing* sin, not in confessing and forsaking it. On the contrary, an ingenuous acknowledgment of his offences, will raise a man from the degradation to which they have sunken him, more than anything else. We never despise a man for confessing his faults against ourselves. Nor can we think that others should. We rather despise him if

he does NOT confess them, and think others should also despise him. Why, then, should we not conclude that all others must judge thus of us ; honoring us for confessing our sins, and despising us for denying them ? If considerate and candid, they cannot do otherwise.

Yet many, and among them some professors of religion, are amazingly reluctant to do this duty. Some have never been known to confess that they have wronged another, even when they cannot but be conscious of having done so. And how the love of God can dwell in such, is a problem. Sometimes they will try to satisfy the injured man by subsequent kindness. But this will not satisfy him. He will feel that the first duty of offenders is *confession*, for which kind treatment can be no substitute. Moreover, he knows not but that they are all the while insisting that they have done him no injustice, and are not even trying to make amends by kindness, but are striving to impose on him a sense of dependence or of obligation. And if so, he will regard them as only adding insult to injury. He will say their only course, either of justice or magnanimity, is a straight out confession.

We have heard of one clergyman of very high standing as to piety and talents, as well as in regard to social position, who, on hearing that a very plain but pious old lady was grieved that he had made sport of her, mounted his horse and rode fifty miles to make an apology. We have heard also of another clergyman, who boasted in public, that neither he, nor any one of his family, was ever known to make an apology. And what intelligent and ingenuous man would not say the conduct of the former was truly noble and lovely, while the boast of the latter was anything but amiable. It is self-evident, then, that the confession of our faults is an honorable and lovely virtue, while the opposite vice is proportionably mean.

FAITH.

Repentance and faith are intimately connected, as they are the feet on which the wandering sinner comes back to God. It is by them, that he returns both to the service and favor of his Maker. We have seen, that in repentance he binds himself to obey God, and thus is prepared for his favor. And we shall see, that by faith he not only secures pardon

and eternal life, but “works by love,” “purifies the heart,” and “overcomes the world.” These are twin graces. Born together in the sinner’s regeneration, they are both essential to his salvation.—Luke 13 : 3 ; 2 Cor. 7 : 10 ; Acts 16 : 31 ; and during his life they work together in him, to promote his growth in grace, and preparation for heaven.

Faith, like repentance, is of two kinds. One is *intellectual belief*, the other is *trust*, or *reliance*. Belief is founded on evidence. All else is presumption or delusion. Infidels insist that they are required to believe the Bible without sufficient proof of its truth. But it is not so. It is not want of evidence, but of inclination, that makes them unbelievers. Divine truth is its own witness. It commends itself to all candid minds, that love what is right. If men were unbiased by depravity, they would see that the doctrines and duties taught in the Bible are happily adapted to promote the welfare of man, and must be from that wise and benevolent Being whom it claims as its author. Infidels do not reject God’s word because they are less credulous, and more scrutinizing of evidence than believers. For the most enlight-

ened of them have been signally credulous in regard to many superstitious notions which Christians reject—notions that have not a shadow of support. The chief source of unbelief, is that hatred of the truth which depravity by the fall has occasioned. Men are therefore accountable for their infidelity, because it is more a matter of choice than of necessity. Accordingly, as we have before said, when this hatred of the truth is removed by the renewing grace of God, the convert is ready to receive all that God has revealed. He sees it is just what it should be—just suited to man's condition—just suited to secure man's highest welfare, and therefore, just what a God of infinite wisdom and goodness must have appointed. And thus it is, that "He that believeth hath the witness in himself."—1 John 5: 10. To him, "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen,"—Heb. 11: 1.

The excellency of such a faith must be evident to all the intelligent and candid. For what can be more manifestly proper and becoming than to believe what is evidently true, and so well suited to promote man's welfare ;

and what more manifestly improper and reprehensible, than to disbelieve and reject it; especially, when to this proof from its adaptation is added its sublimity and purity, its miracles and fulfilled prophecies. Great, then, is the folly of those who glory in their infidelity, and despise those who believe the truth of Divine revelation.

The other kind of faith consists, we have said, in *trust*, or *reliance*. This trust may be in God or in man. And it is evidently suitable and becoming to rely on both, so far as they are trustworthy. When even a man of undoubted truth and ability makes us a valuable promise, it is very unwise and unjust to doubt his word, and reject his offer. But how much more so to distrust and reject the infinitely munificent offers of the God of perfect truth, benevolence and power. And on the contrary, how wise and how commendable to trust and accept his "exceeding great and precious promises," and thus to secure the blessings which we need in the privations, sufferings and perils of the present state.

But there is a faith of reliance far more restricted in its exercises, yet infinitely greater

in its gains. It is *saving* faith. This is a trust in Christ, or rather in his obedience and sufferings for pardon and salvation. And as "There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,"—Acts 4 : 12, as "In him there is plenteous redemption,"—Ps. 130 : 7, and as "The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin,"—1 John 1 : 7, it is eminently proper, wise and praiseworthy to trust in Him ; especially, as "he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned."—Mark 16 : 16. They, then, that are ashamed of Christ, incur to themselves thereby an infinite shame in this life, and finally a resurrection "to shame and everlasting contempt ;" while those who put their trust in Him must be honored in this world, and will be awarded in the world to come with "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

It has, however, been contended by the legalist and the moralist, that this evangelical view of saving faith *encourages disobedience*. It is said, if we rely on Christ's obedience for justification instead of our own, and upon his death to deliver us from the eternal death incurred by our transgression, we shall be en-

couraged to continue our transgressions. But we insist that such is not the tendency of genuine saving faith. It substitutes for fear a more effectual motive to obedience, the all constraining "love of Christ." Thus, "faith worketh by love."—Gal. 5 : 6. All acceptable obedience must be prompted by love. We are, therefore, told, that "love is the fulfilling of the law." And as further proof of its tendency to promote obedience, we are told that "God purifies the hearts of his people by faith,"—Acts 15 : 9, that they purify their own hearts "by *obeying the truth* through the spirit,"—1 Pet. 1 : 22 ; 1 John 3 : 3, and that their faith "overcometh the world,"—1 John 5 : 4. Here, then, is another, and no trivial excellence of faith. It is its tendency. It tends not only to make men obedient, but to cleanse their hearts from the pollutions of sin, and thus to fit them for the blessedness above. Well, then, did Peter call it a "precious faith." For many reasons is it an estimable and a noble grace.

PRAYER.

This also is a duty, which, to be acceptable, must emanate from, or be pervaded by, the various internal graces that have been before considered. It should be offered out of scrupulous regard to principle, and be persevered in, though it should expose us to losses, sufferings or danger. It should be offered in great earnestness and importunity, as the blessings for which we should pray are very great. For if the blessings asked are great, and greatly needed, while our real desires for them are faint, God may well be provoked to spurn our prayer. It should be offered also in ardent love. For if it is seen by "the Searcher of hearts," that while we plead for his favor, we have little or no love for his perfections; and especially, if he sees in us a positive dislike to them, we have little reason to expect that our prayer will be heard. And again, it should be offered in penitence and faith. For how can we expect to be heard of God, so long as he sees in us no genuine sorrow for our past offences against him, and no full purpose to forsake them. Nor should we expect him to hear us, if he sees in us no belief of his good-

ness, or confidence in his promises. "Without faith it is impossible to please God," either in prayer or anything else.

It is evidently the momentous duty of all to offer the prayer above described. And the importance of the duty gives it dignity. To do what *ought* to be done is elevating. There is also an evident propriety in the service to commend it. Men ought, therefore, to be ashamed of neglecting, rather than of discharging this duty. But prayer is a *privilege*, as well as a duty. It is the call of weakness, want and wo, for help and deliverance. It is an unspeakable favor to such helpless and needy, suffering and endangered beings as we are, that we may make known our needs unto One who is able and willing to supply all our wants, and who invites us to come to him in every time of need. This, though we had never offended him, would have been an unspeakable privilege. But how much greater, as by innumerable sins we have forfeited his favor, and deserve to be banished "from his presence, and from the glory of his power." But notwithstanding our ill-deserts, he not only admits us "even to his seat," but *urges* us to come for

the purpose of seeking the pardon of those very sins for which we deserve to be punished with everlasting destruction ; and assures us, that if we seek it aright, we shall not seek it in vain. It would seem as if sinners only needed *permission* to come to the mercy seat. But strange to tell, there is no religious duty which they are more reluctant to perform, and no privilege which they are more unwilling to improve, than that of prayer. And this alone is proof, that they are far estranged from God. They will, when in distress or danger, call readily and loudly on their fellow men for help, even on those from whom they deserve no good, but evil. But unless they have been habituated from childhood to repeat a form of prayer, they are most unwilling of all things to pray, even when under agonizing conviction of sin and condemnation. In nothing else do they show more aversion to God and his service.

In this, too, they manifest a vast amount of preposterous pride. They scorn to confess to God their sin against him, and their unworthiness of his favor. Especially do they scorn to ask pardon of sin for the sake of Christ's righteousness. And they seem to feel as if it would

be the greatest possible disgrace for them to do so. Consequently when driven to the throne of grace under the scorpion lash of conscience, and the agonizing fears of coming wrath, they go there in all possible secrecy, and are more afraid of being caught in prayer, than in some foul transgression. Yet, as we have said before, there is nothing disgraceful in sin but the *commission* of it. To confess it, and to seek forgiveness of it, is the noblest thing which the offender can do in regard to it. While to deny or justify, and to refuse to abandon it, is the basest and most disgraceful thing. As to the asking of favors, none are ashamed of it, but the despicably proud. We are not ashamed to ask them, even of inferiors, much less of superiors. Why, then, should we scorn to ask of the Most High the greatest, and the most needed of all good? Subjects esteem it a high honor and privilege to be admitted into the presence of their monarchs, to ask the favors that they need: an honor and privilege proportioned to the majesty approached, and the favor sought. How exalted, then, is "man in audience with the Deity." And how unspeakable the privilege of seeking and receiving

thus, the greatest blessings which man can enjoy, or God bestow.

PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING.

These are the appropriate accompaniments of prayer. For it is peculiarly proper, that as we come to ask favors of God, we should acknowledge his infinite excellencies, and his former kindness to us. It is well, therefore, to consider them in this connection. *Praise* is the outward expression of our admiration of the Divine attributes and dealings in regard to all men. While *thanksgiving* is the expression of our gratitude to God for his particular mercies *to ourselves*. These duties are often taught in the Scriptures in these terms, as well as under the denomination of *blessing the Lord*. But as the word *bless* is used in a diversity of senses, it may not be amiss to give it here a brief explanation. Its general meaning is, to *speak good*. But this good may be spoken by way of a *declaration* or a *plaudit*, a *wish* or *prayer*, a *promise* or *performance*. God blesses men when he declares his approval of them, when he promises to do them good, and when, by the word of his power, he actually bestows

it upon them. Men bless each other, when they express approbation of others, or a desire or a prayer for their good. And they bless God, when they ascribe to him his glorious perfections; when they acknowledge his goodness to them; and when they express a desire that his will may be done, and his name may be glorified. In other words, they bless the Lord when they render to him praise and thanksgiving.

And can it be reasonably doubted that "Praise is comely for the upright?"—Ps. 33, or whether "It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord?"—Ps. 92. Certainly not. It is universally regarded as a credit to a man to be susceptible of delight and admiration from the grand and beautiful, even when seen in objects inanimate, and equally creditable to give suitable expression to such emotions. How much more so, then, to love and adore the infinite goodness, wisdom and greatness, of the infinitely glorious God. And how fitting, too, to speak "forth the honor of his name" in the hearing of others, that we may "make his praise glorious." We think it no disgrace to be loud in the praise of the great and the good

among men. Why, then, should we be ashamed of Him who is infinite in every excellence? Nor is it less self-evident, that *thanksgiving* is an estimable grace. Ingratitude is universally detestable. Gratitude, then, must be proportionably lovely and commendable. But that its excellency may be appreciated by others, it must be expressed by thanksgiving. And if it is so commendable to render thanks to our fellow men for the few minor favors which they bestow, how much more so, to show gratitude to God for his numberless and inestimable mercies.

It must be admitted that many are using the language of praise and thanksgiving in a very flippant and idle way. They are in the habit of often saying, "Bless the Lord," "Thank God," and the like so frequently, so familiarly, and withal so thoughtlessly, that they seem more profane than devout. For they appear not reverently to consider their solemn import. But it is to be feared, that the most of Christians are too scanty in their expressions of praise and thanksgiving. In their ordinary intercourse, they speak too seldom of the glorious perfections and works of God ; and too seldom

acknowledge the kindness of his gracious and providential dealings with them. And if in this respect their conversation were more devout, their hearts would be improved, and their example be more beneficial to others, as well as better befitting "the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty."

The graces and duties which we have hitherto considered, are such mainly as have God for their object. And in the next place we shall notice such as are exercised, in most cases, toward our fellow men. We shall first consider,

SINCERITY.

This is purity of heart, in opposition to false and deceitful intentions. It is freedom from all inclination to misrepresentation, false appearance and fraud, artifice and cunning. In the man of complete "godly sincerity," there is a perfect correspondence of his thoughts and feelings with his words and actions. He is as anxious to *be* right, as to *appear* right. He is alike troubled about his secret sins, as about his *known* sins. And such is the transparency of his character, that you know just what he

is, and just what you may expect from him. Yet he is not indiscreet in his communications, needlessly revealing what is useless or injurious to himself or others. He may be very reserved, but he will be more careful not to say what is untrue, than to conceal what is wrong in himself.

Many affect to despise all professors of religion, as a set of egregious hypocrites. But no beings on earth are more opposed to hypocrisy than the real child of God. He hates it, if he sees it in himself, as much as in others. And if "the pure in heart" are to be found anywhere, it is among the followers of Christ, whose hearts have been cleansed "by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost," and whose "souls" have been farther "purified by obeying the truth through the Spirit." While on the other hand, none are so hypocritical as the impenitent. They are always "sailing under false colors," always "walking in a vain show," always trying to appear better than they are. And generally they who profess most loudly to scorn the hypocrite, are the ones who most deserve such scorn. Yet some who "sin openly," pretend to do it

for the purpose of showing their hatred to hypocrisy. But they are themselves hypocrites in this very pretence. No! when men sin without concealment, it is because they are so besotted as to have lost their self-respect, or as to "glory in their shame."

As all, even hypocrites, hate hypocrisy in others, they must confess that sincerity is a lovely grace, however unwilling they are to be sincere themselves. And much more must all the right-minded approve of it. It is so evidently right in itself, and so "good and profitable unto men," that every unpervverted heart must love it.

VERACITY.

One of the essential foundations of "pure religion before God," is the *truth*. He "requireth truth in the inward part."—Ps. 51. And veracity is strict and habitual regard to truth, in opposition to falsehood, deception, and false pretences, whether by word or action. It is, therefore, one of the out-growths of sincerity. It is virtually enjoined in the Decalogue, "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor,"—Ex. 20, and by the apostolic

injunctions, "Wherefore, putting away lying, speak every one truth with his neighbor,"—Eph. 4, and "Lie not one to another."—Col. 3. All true Christians must be persons of veracity; for "All liars shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."—Rev. 21.

Nor does it need any argument, to show that veracity is an amiable and honorable grace. Every one must admire the man who is all he professes to be, who does all he promises, though he does it to his own hurt, and who neither utters a direct falsehood, nor attempts, either directly or indirectly, to deceive his fellow men. Even those who are most given to falsehood and deceit, are constrained to approve of truth in others. The greatest liars are very much offended, if called by their right name. Nor, as a general thing, are any characters more despised and detested than those of the trickster, imposter, hypocrite and liar. But in proportion as the false is abhorred, the true must be respected. And when we consider the importance of veracity, both to private and public welfare, and how much its prevalence would lessen the woes, and promote

the weal of the human family, we can hardly hold it in too high estimation.

MORAL HONESTY.

This is strict justice in our dealings with our fellow men. It is sometimes called righteousness, rectitude, uprightness, and "rendering to all their dues." But these express our duties to God, as well as to men. And while some seem to think it sufficient that they are punctual in religious duties, and are, therefore, strangely neglectful of those that they owe to man, others are as strangely neglectful of their duties to God, and seem to think it enough that they are, as they say, "perfectly upright in their dealings with their fellows." But Christ tells us in regard to these two classes of obligations, "These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."—Matt. 23: 23; that is, that *both* should be done by all. On this occasion, however, our attention will be confined to the duties which we owe to mankind.

The mistake of the moralist is not in paying *too much* attention to moral duties, but in relying on them for justification and eternal life.

He needs to be more attentive to them than he is. For Christ says, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. 5: 20. His, like theirs, is superficial and selfish, springing from a desire to make out a "righteousness of his own," by which to be justified. But before he can be saved, he must have one that is cordial, springing from regard to God's will, and man's welfare; a righteousness springing from love to God and man. For on the commands requiring this love, "hang all the law and the prophets."—Matt. 22: 40. *He*, then, and he only, "who loveth another, hath fulfilled the law."—Rom. 13: 8; consequently he only will be saved. For "He that loveth not his brother, abideth in death."—1 John 3: 14.

His righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees also, in that it must extend much farther. Many a man insists that he does all his duty to others, if he but fulfils his *engagements* to them. But he owes them much more than he promises. He owes them also much more than property or service. They have many other rights which he is bound

to respect. To trench on their liberty, pleasure or pursuits, or to take advantage of their ignorance or necessities, mistakes or misfortunes, is as clearly unjust as fraud or theft. Not only their persons and property, but their reputation and sensibilities are dear to them. Any outrage upon them, then, by looks, words or action, may be a cruel injustice.

But though a man's morality should include every possible duty to his fellow men, that would be no ground of claim to eternal life. He would still deserve death for his previous transgressions. And nothing will avail for this but the righteousness of Christ. Our moral duties, then, should be done not to earn salvation, but because God commands them, because they are dear to our fellow men, and because they are needful as evidence that we have a saving faith in Him whose "blood cleanseth from all sin." For it is the tendency of saving faith to make men honest and upright in all their commercial and social intercourse.

The beauty and loveliness of these moral duties are seen in their peculiar propriety and beneficial tendency. They are just such duties as the circumstances in each case make most

appropriate ; and just such as are “good and profitable unto men.” And if they were done by all men, earth would be a paradise. It is then eminently just and good in religion to require them ; and consequently it is eminently excellent and becoming in man to discharge them. The beauty and loveliness of these duties become the more evident and striking by contrast. Back-biting and slander, railing and denunciation, extortion and oppression, injustice and fraud, theft and robbery, violence and cruelty, with the like—how hateful are they, even in the sight of those who practice them, especially when they see them practiced by others, and more especially, when they find them practiced *on themselves*. How lovely and beautiful that piety, then, that conscientiously abstains from them, and practices in place of them, the proper and beneficial virtues. That every Christian will, in all cases, abstain entirely from these immoralities, and practice their opposites, we affirm not. But we do affirm, that they do it in proportion as they grow in grace ; and that whatever of this christian morality they exhibit, should be admired and applauded by all who behold it.

PUBLIC SPIRIT.

This virtue is generally held in such high repute, that it needs no argument to prove its excellency. Nor should we even mention it here, if it were not sometimes insisted, that Christianity rather restrained than promoted it. For though we have already alluded to it, it needs some additional notice. We have given it a political name. But it is truly a christian virtue, being required and promoted by the religion of the Gospel. For in its purity, it is an outgrowth of that *love of good will* to man, which underlies the religion of the Gospel. It is not denied, that many Christians are too deficient in public spirit, as they are in many other christian virtues. Yet many are less defective than they are supposed to be. Many withdraw themselves (too much, perhaps,) from public affairs, because they see so many engaging in them for selfish purposes, and employing wrong measures. And others stand back in disgust, at hearing many prate about their zeal for public good, while they see them to be actuated only by personal or party interest. Indeed, it does not become the Christian to be forward, and noisy, and bustling, in political

strife. Yet so far as he can consistently with his other duties, and with his standing as a citizen of Zion, he should be active in promoting the public weal, being careful always to do the right thing, to do it in the right way, and to do it from right motives. When his influence or efforts are needed to secure important measures for the good of community, they should not be withheld. We believe they seldom are. We believe God's people are not behind others in their desires, contributions and labors for the public good, though they may not make as much ado about it as many others. But the interests of Christ's kingdom are immensely more important than those of the political community. Christians, then, should not pay so much attention to the latter, as will injure the former. They should rather strive to make their *religion* beneficial to the State. Nor is there any way in which they can do more to advance its political welfare, than by praying and laboring for the increase of that religion which includes the soundest political virtue. And much are they doing in this way to promote that "Godliness which is profitable unto all things;" and that "Righteousness which exalteth a nation."

CHARITY.

This word, in its widest Scriptural sense, signifies love to God and man; and is that, as we have before said, which prompts to all the duties of godliness and morality. But it is mostly used, both in the Word of God and in common conversation, in a more restricted sense. For it is something to be added "to godliness and brotherly love."—2 Pet. 1: 7. In common parlance, it is often used to signify liberality in relieving the destitute. But this is not a Scriptural use of it; for the apostle tells us, that we may "bestow all our goods to feed the poor," and still not have charity.—1 Cor. 13: 3. Such liberality is not charity itself; and though it should, it does not always *result* from it. When it does thus result, it is an important christian virtue. But then, it is usually called in Scripture, a "liberal distribution," "doing good," being "rich in good works," "almsgiving," etc. This grace, which is so much urged in God's Word, and so much promoted by his Spirit, is found often, if not only, among his people. And so universally is it esteemed and applauded, that many give alms for the sole purpose of gaining applause.

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But by charity is more frequently meant that kindly treatment which the love of good will ever dictates towards the *erring*. In the thirteenth chapter of Paul's epistle to the Corinthians, its nature is largely described. Verse 4, "Charity suffereth long and is kind ; charity envieth not," or more properly, is not *bitter* or severe toward offenders ; "charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up ;" or is not boastful and proud, as being better than offenders. Verse 5, "Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil ;" that is, it keeps us from being overbearing, selfish, irritable and censorious, or suspicious towards them. Verse 6, It "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth ;" that is, it makes us sorry to find that others have erred, and to rejoice when we find they have acted uprightly. Verse 7, It "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things ;" that is, it makes us so forbearing towards the faults of others, that we are reluctant to expose or complain of them, and inclines us to hope that they can, at least in some measure, be extenuated or excused, if not justified ; or at least, that

some more favorable construction can be given them. And when we cannot but condemn them, it disposes us to be as quiet and uncomplaining toward them as circumstances allow. What, then, can be more evidently magnanimous and amiable, than such a christian virtue? While many scorn to exercise it, as if it would degrade them, it must appear to every considerate mind, both a lofty and lovely grace.

PATIENCE.

This word stands in our translation for two distinct graces, expressed in the original by two different words, the one having reference to some expected good, the other to some present evil. The first is *hupomone*, meaning a quiet, cheerful waiting for some good in prospect; as in Rom. 8: 25, "But, if we hope for that we see not, then do we with *patience wait for it.*" In Rom. 2: 7, it is called a "*patient continuance,*" that is, "in well doing," while waiting the reward of "eternal life." In Rom. 12: 12, it is joined with hope. In 2 Thess. 3: 5, it is called the "patient waiting for Christ." This is not a patience simply in submission to trials, but one which trials pro-

mote. For as Paul says, Rom. 5 : 3, 4, "tribulation worketh patience." For according to 1 Pet. 1 : 7, it is for the trial and increase of our faith, and thus of all our other graces. It relates more to constancy and perseverance in *duty*, than to submission to trials. See Matt. 10 : 22 ; 24 : 13 ; Heb. 10 : 36 ; 12 : 1, 2. And as this patient waiting, in the way of obedience for promised blessings, illustrates our faith and hope, it is evidently an excellent and commendable grace.

But the other word translated *patience*, is *makrothumia*, and signifies a cheerful, uncomplaining endurance of sufferings which God allots, and injuries which man inflicts. It is sometimes translated long forbearance, as in Luke 18 : 7 ; and long-suffering, as in Rom. 9 : 22, and Col. 1 : 11. And in 2 Tim. 3 : 10, it is distinguished from the *other* kind of patience. It is exercised both by God and his people toward sinners."—Rom. 2 : 4 ; 9 : 22. And by saints it is exercised toward God and toward men. Toward God it is a cheerful submission to providential dealings in withholding good, or in inflicting or permitting evil. It is prompted by love to him, and sustained by a confidence

in the rectitude, wisdom and goodness of his appointments—that they are no more than we deserve, no more than is needful, at least to God's glory, if not for our own future good—and that as soon as they cease to be thus needful, (as they always will when we rightly improve them,) he will assuredly remove them. When his suffering is occasioned by the misconduct of others, the saint regards it as coming through the appointment, or at least through the permission, of his heavenly Father, and will therefore say,

“When men of spite against me join,
They are the sword, the hand is thine.”

He is, therefore, the more forbearing toward them, saying, “Let them alone, and let them curse, for the Lord hath bidden them.”—2 Sam. 16: 10. Yet he does not justify them, because they fulfil thus unintentionally the Divine purpose, but says within himself to them, as Joseph to his brethren, “Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good.” This kind of patience results from the love of benevolence, and partakes of the qualities of meekness and mercy.

And who cannot see that both of these graces are peculiarly excellent, being in each case the

best thing possible, consequently most lovely and commendable. How much better does a man appear, while waiting in the way of duty, through difficulty, yet without murmuring, for his promised great reward, than he who is impatient and unfaithful because of its delay. And especially, how much better does he appear, who submits with calmness and dignity to the afflictions which he suffers, than he who is restive and angry, complaining and revengeful.

There are various christian graces that border on, or rather blend in with each other. They make not christian character like a patchwork stitched together, nor like the sutures of a skull fayed together, so that the line of division between the compartments can be distinctly seen. These graces are more like the different figures in a carpet or brocade, where the threads of different colors interlace each other : rather like the different colors of light, when separated by a prism. They are so commingled, that it is difficult to see where one color terminates and another begins, or rather, whether there is not some common ground between them. A group of these graces will

now be considered ; such as meekness, courtesy, pity, mercy, forgiveness, peaceableness. The main element of all these is benevolence, or the love of good will. And the chief difference between them, is owing to the different connections and circumstances in which they are called into exercise. We will first consider,

MEEKNESS.

This, literally, is *tenderness of heart*. It is a mild and gentle temper, a spirit that readily yields to good impressions. It is, consequently, very teachable, ready, therefore, to “receive the ingrafted word of God.”—Jas. 1 : 21. It is indisposed to cavil at the opinions, and to criticise the conduct, of others. It is a spirit that will dispose us to be patient while instructing the perverse,—2 Tim. 2 : 25 ; and in answering the inquiries and cavils of others, respecting the grounds of our hope of salvation,—1 Pet. 3 : 15 ; and in restoring the wandering.—Gal. 6 : 1. It is associated with mercy, kindness, humility, long-suffering and forgiveness,—Col. 3 : 12, 13 ; and it will dispose us to be respectful to superiors, condescending to inferiors, and in the best sense, polite to all.—Tit. 3 : 2.

Many profess to despise meekness as meanness of spirit. And the word may at first have been used to designate such a quality of mind. But as used in Scripture, its signification is very different. It denotes, not a weak, cowardly, quailing spirit, but a gentle, bland, benignant one; one, therefore, which is evidently amiable and noble. As God "beautifies the meek with salvation,"—Ps. 149 : 4, as their meekness is, "in God's sight, an ornament of great price,"—1 Pet. 3 : 4, and as Christ holds up his own meekness for our imitation,—Matt. 11 : 29, what folly in man to despise what God so highly esteems. How much more lovely and noble is he whose tender heart so readily shrinks from evil, and so readily receives impressions of good, and whose spirit is mild and benign, than he who manifests the hardihood, captiousness and malignity of a fiend.

COURTESY.

Says the apostle, 1 Pet. 3 : 8, "Be courteous." But in this translation the effect is put for the cause; for the word thus rendered, literally signifies *friendly minded*. Courtesy, as we use the word, consists in outward conduct, such

conduct towards our fellow men as a friendly spirit prompts. And thus it coincides with the best definition, perhaps, that was ever given of *politeness*; that is, "kindness kindly expressed." All who attempt to show themselves polite or courteous to others, profess to act out of kindness to them. While all the apparent politeness not thus prompted, is false and hypocritical. And alas, that so much of this kind of currency is counterfeit. Many seem to think that courtesy is due only to equals and superiors. But it is due to all. As we are bound by the law of love to *feel* kindly to all, we are bound to *treat* them kindly.

This, like its kindred grace of meekness, is an outgrowth of love. Like it, too, it is a tender spirit, that shrinks from all harshness of speech or behavior which would wound others needlessly, and that prompts to words and actions which soothe and please. Many express a strong detestation of politeness. But it is only because they misapprehend its nature. They suppose it to consist of a round of artificial ceremonies, for the sake of display; or of a mere affectation of respect and kindness, where none is felt. Yet this is its counterfeit,

and not the genuine christian virtue. It is not a cold, empty, ceremonious display, but a warm, cordial kindness. It may lack the elegance and polish of some artificial and studied politeness, but its honesty and heartiness must render it acceptable to men of candor and good sense. But it evinces its greatest loveliness and excellence in its good influence. It quenches anger, for "a soft answer turneth away wrath." It awakens or increases love in those toward whom it is employed. As kind treatment is so pleasing to others, it will be hard for them to withhold their approbation and affection from those who manifest it. And if we were to treat our children and other relatives, our inferiors as well as our superiors, our servants as well as associates, with uniform kindness, we should render them much more happy, and secure from them much more respect and kindness in return. How praiseworthy, then, is the virtue which is so beneficial and benign.

PITY.

This is another outgrowth from love of benevolence ; and is a kindred virtue with meek-

ness and courtesy, differing from them mainly in this, that it has respect chiefly to the *sufferings* of others. It is a tender compassionateness for those who are enduring distress or grief, with a desire to relieve them. It is felt, not only toward the unfortunate, but towards those who deserve all they suffer. The compassionate saint acquiesces in their punishment, yet regrets the pain thus needfully inflicted: just as the kind master or parent does, while correcting his servant or child. Pity extends even to those who have injured ourselves, making us reluctant to punish them, or to have others do so.

But our obligation to compassionate others evidently varies, according to their nearness of connection with us, and by their comparative importance and excellence. It is with this, as we have said it is with the love of good will, from which it emanates. The nearest and the largest objects should receive the greatest share of its benignant rays. To fail of exercising pity and allowable relief to a parent or child, to a husband or wife, brother or sister, to a personal or public benefactor, or to a Christian, or to any one else of excellent moral character,

is a far greater sin than to fail of showing it to others. And that sympathy for the suffering as above described is a most amiable and estimable grace, must be acknowledged by all whose opinion is worth regarding.

MERCY.

This grace differs but little from pity, as above considered. But it is more frequently applied to God than the other is. Yet in such cases, the meaning of pity is much like that of grace. Although both these terms are often used in the same sense, they are also sometimes distinguished; as, "Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father."—1 Tim. 1: 2; 2 Tim. 1: 2; Tit. 1: 4; and 2 John 3; in which cases *grace* may mean the more *general*, and mercy more *specific*, exercise of God's good will; while peace is a still more specific one, as it is a particular result from the other two. But pity is distinguished from mercy in another respect. No doubt God pities those whom he punishes. But when he extends mercy to any, he saves them from the punishment which they deserve. So a parent may feel deep pity for his child while chastising him in needful severity.

But when he shows him mercy, he spares the rod. Again, pity, as we have said, is compassion for all who suffer, whether they deserve it or not ; while mercy is felt towards those only who deserve to suffer, and not to all of them, but only those whom it saves from punishment.

Sympathy is one of those affections which have survived the ruins of the fall ; for it is inherent in man's social nature, being planted there for the benefit of suffering humanity. But it is much impaired by means of the selfishness and malignity which result from native corruption. While religion, by means of the love of good will which it sheds abroad in the renovated heart, greatly purifies and increases this sympathy. And if *native* compassion is confessedly amiable and of good report, though somewhat similar to that which is manifested by one brute for the sufferings of another, how much more is *that* to be loved and commended which the grace of God has greatly augmented and refined.

But the mercy which the Christian is required to exercise is of a far higher order. The command of Christ is, "Love your *enemies*, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate

you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you.”—Matt. 5 : 44. And his spirit promotes what his law enjoins. Christian mercy, then, will lead men to seek, by effort and prayer, the highest good of those who have bitterly hated, and grievously abused them. It is a grace, therefore, which the wicked never approximate. While they see their enemy suffer, the language of their heart is, “Ahah, so would we have it.” But the Christian, under the full exercise of grace, would earnestly desire that his bitter foes might be delivered from their sufferings and dangers. The tender mercies of the wicked never extend their thoughts to the final miseries to which their foes are exposed. But these call out the most earnest prayers of the Christian. He not only forgives his enemies, but like Christ and his first martyr, Stephen, he earnestly prays that God would forgive them, and save them from final wrath. Then what a blessed, what a lovely, and what a lofty grace, is christian mercy.

FORGIVENESS.

This grace is intimately related to several of the foregoing ; and yet it is entirely distinct

from them. It therefore deserves a separate notice in this connection. Patience, that is forbearance or long-suffering, is a *delay* of punishment, while forgiveness or pardon is the utter abandonment of it. So God "endures, with much *long-suffering*, the vessels of wrath, fitted for destruction."—Rom. 9 : 22 ; persons that is whom he does not intend to save from final perdition. So a master may forbear, for a while, to punish an apprentice or a servant. But forgiveness is a purpose *never* to punish. In other words, it is a purpose to treat the offender as if he were innocent. It is distinct, then, from love, meekness, pity and mercy, as it is a specific act of the mind to which these graces lead.

Some deny that we are bound to forgive those offenders who do not confess their faults, repent and seek the pardon of them. But it is evident that we should forgive *all* who injure us. It is true, that in some passages of Scripture we are required to forgive those who repent and confess, even though they repeat the offence and repentance seven times in a day.—Luke 17 : 3, 4. Yet nowhere are we told that the repentant are the only ones whom we are

bound to forgive; while in some passages we are plainly taught to forgive all, whether they repent or not. In Matt. 6: 15, Christ says, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." If it should happen, then, that all who have injured us should refuse to repent, and we on that account should refuse them forgiveness, how could we hope for pardon from God? In Luke 11: 4, Christ teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our sins; for we also forgive *every one that is indebted to us*;" meaning every one who has injured us. Here, then, we are taught to forgive "every one" who has offended us, whether they repent or not. And if we fail to do so, we shut out our own prayer for pardon. Accordingly, in Matt. 18: 35, Christ says, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do unto you," [give you over to the tormentors,] "if ye from your hearts forgive not *every one* his brother their trespasses." And yet again he says, in Mark 11: 25, "When ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against *any*," any, whether they confess their faults or not. Here, then, is sufficient and positive testimony to settle the question.

And yet, as God forgives none but the penitent, it has been inferred that we are not bound to forgive any who trespass against us, unless they manifest penitence, by confessing and asking forgiveness. But God has reasons for withholding mercy from the unrepentant which we have not. He is acting as the moral Governor of the universe, for the purpose of securing its highest good. It would, therefore, be unwise and unsafe for him to pardon any who are still impenitent, and therefore still rebelling against him. For this would paralyze his authority, and encourage rebellion. In the same way it would be unsafe in an earthly magistrate to release such public criminals as are known to be still determined on a course of crime. But we, as private individuals, have no such reason for withholding forgiveness from those who do us personal injuries, except in cases where lenity would lead to new aggressions, injurious to ourselves or others. It is true, that as long as offenders make no confession, and show no sorrow for the injury they have done us, we cannot love and confide in them. Nor does forgiveness involve this. All that it includes is, that we cease to demand satisfaction for the

injury, cease to be angry at those who have done it, and begin to *do*, or at least to *wish*, them good. It involves the love of *benevolence*, but not the love of *moral esteem*. It does not require us to think the offenders to be better than they are. And if they exhibit no sorrow for their faults, and no disposition to desist from them, we cannot, need not, regard them as worthy of our friendship or confidence. This can be illustrated by calling personal injuries (as the Bible does) a *debt*. "Forgive us our *debts*, as we forgive our *debtors*."—Matt. 6: 12. Now, we may forgive a man what he owes us, (that is, purpose and promise never to demand it of him,) and still feel that he was to blame for not *trying* to pay us, or at least for not being *sorry* for such neglect. We may cease, moreover, to vex him about it, and even do him many favors, and still not be willing to *trust* him any more. So we may forgive him other injuries, without respecting his character, or relying on his integrity. Whereas, if he really repents, showing himself truly sorry for his past fault, and fully purposed to treat us hereafter as he ought, it will be our duty to restore him to our esteem and confidence. Yet

even this is not *forgiveness*. It is *reconciliation*.

And who will deny that the grace here described is a lovely and a noble one? It is god-like. It cannot, therefore, be otherwise than lovely and noble. God freely forgives the offences of all who truly repent, and rely on the atonement of Christ. And he would evidently forgive all others, if he could do it as safely to his government as we can. But it is the more excellent, because it is infinitely important. For without it, we cannot be forgiven of God, and saved. How great is the folly and madness of the many, then, who are too proud and vindictive to forgive injuries; and whose final portion must be eternal woe, and everlasting contempt. On the contrary, how wise and how worthy to forgive our worst enemies.

PEACEABLENESS.

This is also an emanation from the love of good will. It likewise partakes somewhat of the meekness, mercy, and other like graces before considered. Christian peace is a quiet and a tranquillity, which is the opposite of turmoil and trouble, enmity and war. It is a plant

that "grows not in nature's garden," though a semblance of it may be found there. "The wicked are like the troubled sea, which cannot rest.—There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."—Isa. 57: 20, 21. But though the Spirit of God increases in conviction man's turbulence, yet in regeneration it gives him a heavenly serenity. By nature men are "haters of God,"—Rom. 1: 30, as well as "hateful and hating one another."—Tit. 3: 3. But when "the love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost,"—Rom. 5: 5, they have "peace with God," peace of conscience, and "peace among themselves." This is, therefore, said to be a "fruit of the Spirit."—Gal. 5: 22. And as nothing is so painful as the frown of God's wrath, so nothing is more delightful than the tokens of his love. It is therefore said, that "the peace of God," which "keeps the hearts and minds" of saints, "*passeth all understanding.*"—Phil. 4: 7. Again, as enmity to God and man, together with the disturbances and contentions which it occasions, is a source of great uneasiness and trouble, it is a great blessing to be brought into a state of peace with all. A grace, then, so evidently beautiful in itself,

and so beneficial in its effects, should be greatly loved and prized by all.

But *peaceableness* is something more. It is a disposition to *cultivate* peace—to cultivate it in our own hearts, and among our fellow men. The peaceable man desires to be at peace with others, and to have them at peace with himself. He therefore strives to repress all bitterness within, and to foster benevolence toward others. He strives also to conduct towards others in such ways as best to disarm their enmity, and to call out their confidence and love; thus endeavoring, “as much as lieth in him, to live peaceably with all men.”—Rom. 12: 18. “He follows after the things that make for peace, and things whereby one may edify another,”—14: 19; giving up many rights and privileges for that purpose. And this must be a most amiable and excellent virtue, as it is a step beyond that of forgiving our enemies, and as it greatly promotes the happiness of all who are peaceable. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren,” and all others, “to dwell together in unity.”—Ps. 133.

But this disposition leads still farther. It prompts the saint to many means for the pur-

pose of persuading those around him to be "at peace *among* themselves." And in this world of alienation, enmity and strife, how much needs to be done in this way of mediation; how much that might bring many to live together in quietness and love, who are now treating each other with reserve, if not with cold neglect; or eyeing each other with dark suspicion, if not assailing each other with bitter words. For much of the estrangement and enmity, bickering and contention, among men, is owing to their *misunderstandings*. And much might be done toward restoring the parties to harmony and friendship, by first searching out the nature and occasion of the misconception, and then of explaining them to the parties concerned. Much might be done, too, by showing them how much better it is to soften each other's feelings by kind language and behavior, than to exasperate each other by bitter words or harsh treatment. How much better to be employed thus, than, like many, to be "sowing the seeds of discord," and "blowing the coals of strife." How high the honor which Christ has awarded such. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the

children of God.”—Matt. 5 : 9. Great, too, is the present as well as final blessedness which such secure. For, “*The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.*”—Jas. 3 : 18. Surely, then, a virtue so lovely in itself, and so beneficial both to its subject and its object, should be highly esteemed among men.

GOVERNMENT OF THE TONGUE.

This is the last duty *to others* which we purpose to notice in this connection. And this, too, is nearly allied to the graces before noticed, it naturally resulting from them. For meekness, courtesy, pity, mercy and forgiveness forbid all evil speaking. Nor should we give this subject a separate notice, if it were not for the fact, that the right government of the tongue is a duty of peculiar importance. “Death and life,” says Solomon, “are in the power of the tongue.” “And the tongue,” says an apostle, “is a fire, a world of iniquity : so is the tongue among the members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature, and is set on fire of hell.” And the right government of the tongue is not only important, but difficult. The same apostle therefore adds,

“Every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame.” Yet it *can be*, and *is*, tamed by the Spirit of God. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” So far, then, as the Spirit fills the heart with benevolent affections, it tames the tongue into mild and benevolent utterances. Those professors of religion, then, who indulge much in evil speaking, (as alas, many do,) have reason to fear, lest they have no part with the people of God. For, says the same apostle, “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain.”

We are commanded to “speak evil of no man”—evil, whether it be true or false. We should neither reveal nor repeat what is true of another, when it will injure him, unless for the purpose, and with the prospect, of bringing him to repentance, or of keeping him from injuring others. In all other cases, the law of love requires us to keep silence. As we should not report his faults to others to his injury, so we should not charge them upon himself, ex-

cept for his own good. That charity which "is not easily provoked," which "hopeth all things, endureth all things," requires us to forbear all threatening or censure, except for the purpose of his reformation, or at least of hindering his repeating the offence. All the benevolent affections of the christian religion prompt its possessors to address others in the language, tones and looks of kindness. And if this were done by all, a world of evil would be prevented. As such kind addresses are so effectual to melt the offender, to cheer the sad, to encourage the desponding, and to console the sorrowing, there is no estimating the good which they would accomplish. How excellent is that religion, then, which commands and promotes this right use of the tongue; and how lovely are they who are thus governed by its authority and influence. All must highly esteem this grace, however reluctant they may be to practice it.

We will now notice a few virtues which have more or less regard to God and our fellow men at large, but whose main and more direct influence is to promote our *own* welfare. We mention first,

HUMILITY.

This promotes reverence toward God, and a proper treatment of our fellow men. But it is still more productive of good to ourselves. The word which we translate humility, was originally used to signify a mean spirit. But inspiration gives it a very different meaning. *Christian* humility is a "lowliness of mind" arising from right views of our character and standing in the sight of God, especially of our frailty and dependence, our ignorance and sinfulness. It is the opposite of pride and vanity, arrogance and boasting, self-righteousness and self-importance. Especially is it a sense of unworthiness as to the approbation and favor of God. Though the humble saint has a firm hope of pardon and salvation, he takes no glory to himself on that account, but ascribes it all to the grace of God through the atonement of Christ.

Humility is promoted by comparing ourselves with the character and perfections of God. For we shall thus be led to exclaim with Job, "But now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself and repent in dust and ashes." So also is it

somewhat promoted by comparing ourselves with the more excellent of our fellow men. We are therefore exhorted, "In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves."—Phil. 2 : 3. Yet this does not require us to esteem others better than they are, nor to consider ourselves worse than we are; but to scrutinize our own failings more than those of others. A truly humble man is disposed to speak of himself as far inferior to others, while he is actually superior. But this is owing to the fact, that he is less disposed to search out the faults of others than his own, consequently he is less acquainted with them. And thus he *appears to himself* to be worse than they. When, therefore, we hear him speak thus, we should not accuse him of hypocrisy, as many do, any more than we should charge the apostle Paul with it, when he declares himself to be "less than the least of all saints." When the Christian is most affected with a view of his own vileness, it seems to him as if no others could be so unworthy.

If any doubt whether humility is a becoming and lovely grace, it must be because he mistakes its nature, or hates to exercise it.

Either he affixes to it its heathen signification of *meanness*, or supposes, as some erring religionists do, that it consists in a shabby dress, a dejected look, or a cringing behavior, or in his native pride and self-consequence he scorns to take the place which properly belongs to him. Such a person loves not to practice humility *himself*, yet he does love to see it in others. And all men hate its opposites, such as pride and vanity, self-consequence and haughtiness, ostentation and insolence, how much soever they are inclined to delight in these things themselves. Even when another has some distinguished excellence, they are disgusted if he is proud of it, and admire him, if he is not. How much more we admire a beautiful woman, if she seems unconscious of her beauty; and a man of wealth or talents, if he seems to be unmindful of them. How commendable are they, then, who, though heirs to a crown of glory, and a kingdom of eternal blessedness, will glory only in the cross of Christ. How amiable are they, who, by their humility, are assimilated to the meek and *lowly* One, who is "altogether lovely." And how estimable must that grace be to which God

has made so many great and precious promises. "Before honor is humility."—Prov. 15: 33; 18: 12. "By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life."—22: 4. "He that humbleth himself shall be exalted."—Luke 18: 14. "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace unto the humble."—1 Pet. 5: 5.

SELF-DENIAL.

This is a refusal to gratify ourselves in what is forbidden, or in what would interfere with the higher interests of others. It has a connection with our duties to God and man, and yet is very important as regards our own interest. It is only in fact an abstinence from some little apparent good, to secure what is immensely greater. It is, therefore, not only a commanded christian duty, but a most important benefit. It is the very first step to be taken in the way of salvation. Said our Savior, "If any man will come after me, let him *deny himself*, and take up his cross and follow me."—Matt. 16: 24. And it is a duty which will continue, as long as there are any evil desires or inclinations remaining. While the Christian remains imperfect, many selfish desires will

nestle in his heart, and will need to be denied when he would do his duty. This is the main christian warfare that he has to wage through life. His duties both to God and man will require a continual conflict with his remaining love of wealth, honor, ease and pleasure. Patience, meekness, mercy, forgiveness, and many other and kindred virtues, will require him to resist his native inclination to malevolence, anger and revenge. And so great an amount of selfish and evil propensities remain in the renovated heart, that no small effort must be made to overcome them. How fallacious, then, is the notion of some theologians, that we cannot act in opposition to our permanent evil inclinations. We must do so, or fail to enter the path of life. We must do so, or fail to walk onward and upward in the way of holiness.

But let it not be supposed, that because a religious life is a self-denying one, it is consequently a dreary and painful one ; and is therefore to be viewed with aversion and dread. Not at all. Self-denial is always amply rewarded. It is only giving up the less for the greater good. It is rather giving up not only what is evil and odious, but what is injurious, for what

is far better for us. If we praise the man who makes some painful and mighty efforts for a while, that he may gain a competency for life ; or him who submits at times to some unpleasant regimens, that he may secure a longer and healthier life, how much more should we praise the Christian, who, by his self-denial, not only escapes the world of wo, but secures both a happier life in this world, and in the world to come, "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

SOBRIETY.

There are two different words in the original Greek Testament that are translated *sober*. One signifies the opposite of *intoxication* by strong drink. But as intemperate drinking is so much condemned in the Bible, and in virtuous communities, and especially as so much has been said of late, through the press and on the platform, in praise of temperance, it is needless to prove its excellence here. Nor can any candid and intelligent persons doubt that the religion of Christ, which so solemnly enjoins temperance, is powerful to promote it. For regenerating grace has reformed its thousands

of inebriates, while few, if any, real Christians continue intemperate. A veteran lecturer on temperance says, "Out of many thousands of intemperate men who have signed the pledge under me, very few have kept it to the end, unless they became new creatures in Christ Jesus."—*N. Y. Observer*, June 16th, 1859.

But the other word signifies that *sobriety* which is opposed to undue moral excitement, and other irregularities of mind. Sometimes it is translated a "right mind."—Mark 5 : 15 ; Luke 8 : 35 ; sometimes "of a sound mind."—2 Tim. 1 : 7. It is incompatible with self-conceit and self-consequence;—Rom. 12 : 3, and with extravagance of dress and immodesty of conduct.—1 Tim. 2 : 9. It is the opposite of lightness and frivolity, and every excessive passion. And it is equally opposed to those wild, extravagant religious notions, which are too common in our day. More piety would correct them. Sobriety is earnestness without undue agitation, and a serious gravity without sadness. It is a seriousness that is consistent with cheerfulness, and even joy. It is that sedate, well-balanced, considerate state of mind, which is best suited to the contemplation of

truth and duty, as well as to the promotion of our usefulness and welfare. Nor can it be doubted, that what the Gospel so often inculcates, and its spirit so much promotes, is truly a *christian* grace.

And the fitness and excellency of this grace is evident, in view of the high position to which saints are exalted. As “kings and priests unto God,” as “the sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty,” and as “heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ,” it ill becomes them to be frivolous and trifling, to flutter in gew-gaws, and to disport themselves in splendid and costly apparel, equipage or mansions. Equally unbecoming to be intoxicated with the possessions, pleasures and honors of this life, while expecting an infinitely better inheritance on high, and charged in the meantime with high momentous duties—duties the more faithfully they perform, the greater will be their eternal reward. If any think sobriety is unlovely and repulsive, it must be because they associate seriousness with sadness and gloom; and happiness only with levity and merriment. Whereas, the most intense enjoyment is felt, when the mind is the most calm and sedate. All the holy on high

are perfectly serious, yet perfectly happy. And so the holy on earth may be most sober and solemn, while unspeakably happy in the service of God, and in the hope of the "fullness of joy," and "the pleasures forever more at God's right hand." What folly, then, to shrink from sobriety, as if it were incompatible with present enjoyment.

HEAVENLY-MINDEDNESS.

This consists in giving our thoughts, desires and efforts, habitually and mainly to "things heavenly and divine." It is commanded by Christ, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven—for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."—Matt. 6: 19–21. It is urged also by the apostle Paul, "Set your affections on things above, and not on things on the earth."—Col. 3: 2. But it cannot be intended in these and similar passages, to forbid *all* attention to worldly affairs. For, as we shall show hereafter, some attention to them is both needful and commanded. Such passages are figurative, and do but teach us in strong language, that we should be *far more*

attentive to our heavenly, than to our earthly interests, because they are infinitely more valuable.

Now that such heavenly-mindedness is wise, and well becomes the people of God, is most manifest. What can be wiser than to devote most attention and effort to the attainment and increase of our highest interest? And when it is secured, what is wiser than to give it our chief affection? What is more becoming "the sons of God," than to keep in mind their high and heavenly birth, and their rich and glorious inheritance? How unbecoming for "the children of a King," to have no higher musings, and no higher aspirations, than hostlers and hodmen, paupers and beggars? What folly in a man who is just ready to step into a vast estate, to be giving his chief attention, anxiety and effort, to some sixpenny enterprises? What folly in those who are about to drink from the fountain of life, a "fullness of joy," and "pleasures forever more," to be always in eager hunt for the impure, unsatisfying puddles of earthly enjoyment? Oh, how much do many professors of religion degrade themselves, by talking eternally about the

fashions and amusements of the day, about rich dishes and splendid dresses, about worldly distinctions and worldly gains. How much more would they honor themselves and their christian profession, if they would speak as much about the ordinances of God's house, the delights of his service, the bread that comes down from heaven, the robes of a Savior's righteousness, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, the high honors which God confers upon his children, and the infinite riches of his saving grace.

But heavenly-mindedness is estimable, not merely because it is a lofty tone of mind, well befitting the children of the Most High; but because it is a state of high enjoyment in the present life. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come."—1 Tim. 4: 8. It is emphatically so in this case, as the more the Christian contemplates his inheritance on high, as well as the infinite grace that makes it his, the more by anticipation does he now enjoy it. The better also does he bear the afflictions and sorrows incident to the present life. Moreover, the more he sets his affections

on things above, the more he will grow in grace. Consequently, the more he will enjoy of heaven below, and the higher will be his seat in heaven above. He, then, who gives his anxiety and labor mainly to "lay up treasures on earth,"

"Resembles ocean into tempest wrought
To waft a feather, or to drown a fly."

DILIGENCE IN TEMPORAL DUTIES.

While many professors of religion are censured by the world as laboring too eagerly for the things of this life, others are equally censured for being too neglectful of them. Many insist that Christianity requires its votaries to spend so much time in religious duties, as not to leave enough for the promotion of their temporal interests. But it will be seen, that religion requires a proper portion of attention to the concerns of both worlds. It requires us to be "Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."—Rom. 12: 11. It does indeed require us to give our first and chief attention to our spiritual interests; to "Seek *first* the kingdom of God and his righteousness," and to "labor less for the meat which perisheth, than for that which endureth unto

everlasting life." And how reasonable, that what is most important should have the most attention. Besides, the Christian is required to spend no more time in that "godliness which is profitable unto all things," than the most of sinners do in unprofitable, pernicious devotion to sin and Satan. While the faithful Christian is often the more strenuous, when engaged in his secular concerns, that he may gain the more time for the service of God. Again, much of his duty to God can be done while he is occupied in worldly employments. Thus he is "not slothful in business," while at the same time, in tongue or heart he is "serving the Lord." For much of his employment is such, that his mind may be active on high, while his hands are busy below. Besides, his needful secular business should be a part of his religion. He should attend to it as a duty which God requires of him. And how much better is an activity thus prompted, than that whose motives are riches, or pleasure, or fame.

Man was made for action. Idleness injures his health, his mind and morals. And in general, he needs to labor, for the proper support of himself and family. These truths are so

self-evident, that all are ready to condemn the lazy and the lounging ; and equally ready to praise the active and industrious. We need not labor, then, to prove that *diligence in business* is an excellent virtue. But we do need, perhaps, to show more fully than we have, that it is truly a *christian* virtue. For many insist that religion leads to idleness and sloth, quoting the example of some in proof of their position. Nor will it be denied, that many who profess religion are altogether too indolent. But it is not religion that makes them so. On the contrary, if religion does not make the lazy diligent, it is because it has not had its full and appropriate effect upon them. A *slothful* Christian is as great a solecism as a *disobedient* or *dishonest* Christian. No book condemns the sluggard and the idler, or applauds the diligent man, more than the Bible. Numerous denunciations of the one, and commendations of the other, are found in the single book of Proverbs. And Paul inculcates industry in the strongest terms. He says, "For when we were with you, this we commanded, that *if any would not work, neither should he eat*. For we hear that there are some which walk among

you *disorderly, working not at all*, but are busy-bodies. Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they *work*, and eat their own bread.”—2 Thess. 3: 10–12. Again he says, “Let him that stole, steal no more; but rather *let him labor, working with his own hands* the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.”—Eph. 4: 28. And again, “But if any provide not for his own, especially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.”—1 Tim. 5: 8. Thus we see that Christianity requires us to be industrious, both for the support of ourselves, of our families, and of the needy. Those who fail to do so, are far, very far, from acting like Christians.

CHRISTIAN CONTENTMENT.

While Christianity enjoins that diligence which “maketh rich,” it forbids a man to be “greedy of gain.” It does not condemn him for *having* riches, but for that inordinate *love* of them which is “the root of all evil”—that desire and resolution to be rich which expose him to “temptation and a snare, and to many

foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.”—1 Tim. 6 : 9. It allows, nay, it requires, him to gain all he can by proper means for his own comfort, for supplying the wants of the needy, and for advancing the kingdom of Christ among men.

Christian contentment is the opposite of covetousness, fretfulness and murmuring, as to our worldly possessions. It is neither indifference nor discouragement. It is neither indolence nor love of ease. It is not inconsistent with ardent desire and ardent efforts to improve our present condition. But it is a cheerful acquiescence in the providence of God, when such desires and efforts are defeated. It is the absence of that undue anxiety for the possessions, pleasures and honors of earth, which is so painful under Divine restraints. It is a submission to, and a trust in, that providence which orders all things in righteousness, wisdom and goodness. It is that, too, which prevents our envy of those who have what we desire.

Many of the impenitent have what is *called* contentment. But it has not a christian origin. They have less eagerness for worldly good than some others, nay, than some worldly professors.

But it arises from indifference or sloth, or the want of enterprise. While *christian* contentment arises from that *heavenly-mindedness* which “sets the affections on things above, and not on things on the earth”—from a view of the utter emptiness of earthly good, as compared with a treasure in heaven; also from resignation to the will of God, as expressed in his providence. The saint is therefore much more anxious to enhance his spiritual, than his temporal welfare. He “seeks first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” believing that, if he is diligent in the appropriate means, “all things needed will be added unto him.” And having made all suitable efforts to gain this world’s goods, for the purpose of promoting the comfort of himself and family, the supply of the needy, and the support and spread of the Gospel, he leaves it contentedly with God to determine how far his efforts shall succeed. And he is the more contented, as he suffers so much less, and enjoys so much more, than he deserves; and because he believes his privations will not only redound to God’s glory, but will “work together for his good;” yea, will “work out for him a far more exceeding

and eternal weight of glory.” He is the more contented, too, because he believes, that just so soon as his privations have answered the purpose of Divine goodness, his wants will be supplied ; and that God will give all the good things of this life which are needful to his ultimate welfare.

To all considerate and candid minds, it must be evident that the contentment here described is a most excellent and amiable grace. It becomes the position and prospects of the Christian. It exhibits a proper comparative value of things earthly and things heavenly. It exhibits a proper resignation to the wise and benignant sovereignty of God, and a proper reliance on his promises. How much more magnanimous and lovely, to submit calmly under thwarted purposes and disappointed hopes, than to fret and repine under them. And how much more agreeable and worthy of esteem is he who is cheerful and satisfied with the small amount of earthly goods which the Lord has allotted him, than he who makes himself, and all around him, wretched by his discontent and murmurs.

CHRISTIAN JOY.

The last grace which we shall here consider, is a pleasure derived from the contemplation of present or expected good. A moderate degree of it is usually called *gladness*. *Christian joy* is a rejoicing in *spiritual* good. It is called in Scripture, "Joy in the Holy Ghost,"—Rom. 14: 17; and "The fruit of the Spirit,"—Gal. 5: 22; because it is that divine agent which gives us a heart to rejoice over spiritual blessings. For the unconverted have no delight at all in them. It is also called "The joy of faith,"—Phil. 1: 25; because it is on condition of faith in Christ, that any have a title to such blessings. But joy is more immediately connected with *hope*. The Christian rejoices mainly because he hopes he has "access by faith" to them.—Rom. 5: 2.

It is surely becoming for the Christian to rejoice, when he has so much good in possession and in prospect. The thunders of Sinai are hushed, and "the voice of free grace" is heard by him from Calvary. His sins are forgiven, and death and hell, which once terrified, now cease to alarm him; for now they "have no

more dominion over him." The bands of sin are broken, and he has come into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Through renewing grace he is brought to "delight in the law of God;" and finds "*in* keeping his commands there is great reward." And he has the promise, that "all things," even his sorest trials in life, shall be overruled for his higher good, and eventuate in his "far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;" that death itself, so terrible to the impenitent, shall be to him an infinite gain, ushering him into "the fullness of joy, and pleasures forever more at God's right hand." Why, then, should he not rejoice? Who else has so much occasion for joy?

And christian joy is not only proper and becoming, it is most precious and desirable. It is a happy, delightful emotion. The word is used to express the highest enjoyment that is felt on earth and in heaven. How false the notion of the world, then, that Christians are in general a gloomy and dejected set; and that those who would embrace religion must bid adieu to all earthly enjoyments, and lead a cheerless, unhappy life. Doubtless many a

saint appears too sad and melancholy ; some by reason of an ascetic temperament, and others by erroneous views of the nature of true piety. And others again are not as joyous as they ought to be, because they are not as pious as they ought to be. Such should pay more heed to the command of Christ, "Ask, that your joy may be full."

But the error is mainly on the part of the impenitent. They confound sobriety and seriousness with dejection. Nor do they consider that godly sorrow for sin is far overbalanced by the happy hope of a final deliverance from its punishment and power. But as Christians have far more occasion than others to rejoice, and as they are so often commanded to rejoice, to "rejoice and be exceeding glad,"—Matt. 5 : 12 ; to "rejoice *evermore*,"—1 Thess. 5 : 16 ; can it be that they fail to do so ? No ! many are the declarations of God's Word, that they do rejoice. Peter tells us, that even when they are in heaviness through manifold temptation, they "greatly rejoice," even "with joy unspeakable and full of glory."—1 Pet. 1 : 6-8. And the testimony of inspiration is confirmed by observation and experience. On

comparing the pious with the wicked, we shall find the former no less joyful than the latter. They have less hilarity and mirth. They may be more sedate and solemn. But they will be seen to enjoy more peace of mind, more cheerfulness, and more solid and uniform mental enjoyment. And every real Christian will tell you he is much happier since, than he was before, his conversion.

The foregoing graces and virtues are not all that belong to Christianity. But they are abundantly sufficient, we think, to show that this religion, *as a whole*, is most lovely and beautiful, most excellent and commendable, and "worthy of all acceptance." And the foregoing view of our subject leads us to the following

CONCLUSION.

Christianity is the most efficient agency for the amelioration of man's condition in life, whether *individually* or *socially*, *morally* or *politically* considered. It is the only source from which genuine personal refinement, and moral virtue, can originate. We might as well expect a bird to walk on artificial legs, or to

fly with artificial wings, as that men will become refined and virtuous, benevolent and useful, without the spirit and principles of vital and practical godliness to prompt and to guide them. It is indeed true, that many professors of religion are sadly defective in these christian graces. But they are truly religious only so far as they do have them; and so far as they are defective in them they are *irreligious*. They may be defective in these things, and yet be Christians. But they will be thus far imperfect ones. While, if they are utterly destitute of them, they are alike destitute of real religion. And so far as Christianity does prevail to superinduce upon us its graces and virtues, it promotes our individual happiness, our respectability and usefulness among men. Nor is it necessary to add, that it is the only thing that will save us from final wrath, and secure us eternal bliss. Thus we see, that in the fullest sense of the words of the apostle, Christianity or "godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come."

CHAPTER II.

SHOWING HOW AND WHY THE PEOPLE OF GOD
SHOULD STRIVE BOTH TO ATTAIN AND TO
EXHIBIT THE EXCELLENCIES OF THE CHRIS-
TIAN RELIGION.

Hitherto we have been treating our subject theoretically, to show that Christianity, in all its elements, is worthy of the approbation, applause and love of all men; and believe we have succeeded. But we shall next attempt to treat it practically, for the purpose of urging upon the people of God the duty of cultivating to the utmost, all the duties and graces of the christian religion; and likewise, the duty of displaying them before the world. That it is their duty to do both, is most evident. For the law of Christ requires them to have all the elements of godliness in perfection. Nor can they excuse themselves in the least for their deficiencies by pleading inability, since such as it is,

their inability is itself a sin. Much less can they excuse themselves for not striving all they can to fulfil the Divine requirement. And it is equally evident, that they should not only possess all the characteristics of religion, but should exemplify them as much as possible to others. For while Christ forbids them to make a display of piety for the sake of securing applause to themselves, he commands them to do it for the purpose of glorifying God, and of benefitting their fellow men. "Let your light so shine before men," he says, "that they may see *your good works*, and *glorify* your Father which is in heaven."—Matt. 5 : 16. And by his apostle he says, "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification."—Rom. 15 : 2. Nor in anything can we please others more to their benefit, than in commending religion to them by a holy and amiable example. There is no need, then, of argument, in proof of this duty. We need only to urge Christians to discharge an obligation which is already evident. But as many of them are apt to suppose themselves less deficient in this duty than they are, it will be mainly needful to notice some of those particular instances and

ways in which they are apt to be deficient ; and then to urge the importance, means and motives of preventing such deficiency.

1. Many fail to exemplify all the excellencies of Christianity, not so much by intention, as *through the influence of remaining evil impulses and habits*. The peculiar and strong inclinations of the sinner are apt to re-appear after his conversion. They are conquered and crippled, but not annihilated. And he often fails to restrain them as he ought. Some persons have certain unpleasant oddities, or singularities of manner, before conversion, which they afterwards fail to correct. Some fail to do so through thoughtlessness, while others retain them purposely, perhaps, and even foster them, in hopes of thereby securing more attention from others. A striking case of the kind is found in Lorenzo Dow. Such oddities may sometimes benefit a man, by setting off his talents to advantage by contrast. But they are blemishes on the Christian's character that prevent his exhibiting the full loveliness of religion, and should therefore be removed. For though they help him some personally, they injure religion much. Converts should be

mindful that regeneration leaves in them many propensities and habits which they should be resolute and vigorous in correcting. It is thus that they should "grow in grace," and "build up themselves on their most holy faith." And they should be urged the more to do so, by the fact that the world is watching with eagles' eyes to find some fault in them, for which to vilify and discard religion. They should strive, then, to eschew, as far as possible, all things which might furnish the enemies of the cross a pretext for such opposition.

2. Many fail of exemplifying all the excellencies of religion, through *indifference or carelessness, as to the opinion of others*. While some are over-anxious about their reputation, and even attempt to advance it by improper means, these neglect to prevent reproach and to secure reputation by *proper* means. Reputation is not the principal thing; nor should it ever be sought at the sacrifice of duty or usefulness. Yet it is very important to our own welfare, and more so to the welfare of others, when sought in the way of righteousness. Too many live as if faith and repentance were their only duties, and as if, having been

forgiven and born again; they have done all they need. But thus far they have only *begun* their work. They act as inconsiderately as a farmer, who should think it enough to purchase and clear his land; while this is but a preparation for a life-long of planting and weeding, repairing and improving his premises. In all *temporal* interests, men aim at progress, increase, amelioration. The merchant seeks to enlarge his stock and extend his trade. The mechanic strives to increase his skill and dispatch, and to enlarge his business. The husbandman endeavors to enrich his soil, to secure better seed, better implements, and better stock—and thus to increase his convenience and comforts for life. And why should “the children of this world be wiser in their generation, than the children of light?” Why should saints neglect to improve their hearts and characters, while such great improvements need to be made? One grand purpose for which Christ died, was to “purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” Tit. 2: 14. And one of the principal things for which the gospel ministry was established, is “the perfecting of the saints.”—Eph. 4: 11, 12.

How important, then, that all seek to accomplish the object by "cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."—2 Cor: 7, 1. It is important to their own welfare, both in the present and future world. But the motive which we would urge mainly, is that it would increase their usefulness among their fellow men. It would enable them to make fuller exhibitions of the beauty and loveliness of religion, thus winning sinners to Christ and salvation. And if all Christians acted thus, how many more would, "without the word, be won by the conversation of the wives," not only, but by that of others, "while they behold their chaste conversation coupled with fear—even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price."—1 Pet.: 3, 1-4.

And yet some professors of religion seem purposely to eschew several of the blander and benigner christian graces, from a mistaken notion that they savor of insincerity, pretence and false show. They are like the clergyman who said it was beneath the dignity of a Christian to be a gentleman. They despise suavity and po-

liteness, and assume a blunt, brusque manner, for the purpose of showing, as they say, that they are unostentatious, honest, and sincere. But how unwise to suppose that a rough and rugged aspect is most indicative of humility and truth. And how strange, that they should deem it their duty to act towards others in a way calculated to disgust and offend them, while the direction of the Bible is, "Let every one of us *please* his neighbor, for his good to edification. For, even Christ pleased not himself."—Rom. 15 : 2, 3. And if these professors were to copy more fully "the meekness and gentleness of Christ," how much better they would exhibit that "simplicity and godly sincerity" which the gospel enjoins; and how much more they would commend themselves and the religion they profess, to the impenitent around them.

3. Others fail through *the want of symmetry in their christian character*. They are comparatively punctilious and thorough in some duties, while they are very defective in others; and they seem to think with certain Jews whom Christ reproved, that by extra attention to favorite duties, they can purchase exemption

from others. But Christ teaches this to be impossible. He says, "These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."—Mat. 23 : 23. Evidently the weightier matters of the law" should have our chief attention. Yet the minutest duties, or those like the tithing of mint and anise and cummin, should not be left undone. Complete symmetry of christian character requires the presence of all the christian graces in their proper proportions. This symmetry is the more difficult to be obtained, because the more we engage in certain duties, the more important they seem to us; while the more we neglect our other duties, the less we feel their importance. This is the reason why some religionists are very exact in certain services, and feel much self-condemnation when they omit them; while they are very neglectful of other services equally important, without feeling much compunction for being so. They should, therefore, give the case a more extensive and accurate attention.

It is lamentable, that there is so much lack of care as to this completeness of christian character. One man will be found to be very zeal-

ous and active in promoting the conversion of sinners. His prayers for them are fervent, his warnings solemn, and his entreaties earnest and tender. And yet this man will afterwards be found to be very selfish, penurious, narrow-minded, and hard in his worldly transactions. Another is very conscientious and punctilious in the service of God, and rigidly honest in his dealings with his fellow-men. But he is passionate and hasty; and when excited, is severe and abusive in his speech. Others, again, are kind hearted and liberal, in relieving the needy; and yet they are neither cautious not to invade the rights of others, nor prompt in paying their dues. There are, also, many other respects in which Christians too often betray great inconsistencies of character. And such cases are the more to be deplored, because the more eminent their excellence in some virtues, the more conspicuous their defects in others. This truth is graphically expressed by Solomon: "Dead flies cause the ointment of the apothecary to send forth a stinking savor; so doth a little folly him that is in reputation for wisdom and honor,"—Ecl. 10: 1. How repulsive would be a shabby and filthy garment

upon one who is otherwise neatly and superbly dressed? And so, the more brilliant and beautiful a picture, the more deforming by contrast would be a foul blot upon it. So also is any moral defect in a character otherwise excellent. It would shock us far more to hear a saint, than a sinner, swear. The fact, then, that Christians are eminent for some traits of piety, instead of releasing them from others, furnishes additional reason why they should be eminent in all. Paul, accordingly, says, "Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, [thence enumerating several christian duties,] see that ye abound in this grace also."—2 Cor. 8 : 7. And in another place he says, "*Whatsoever* things are true, *whatsoever* things are honest, *whatsoever* things are just, *whatsoever* things are pure, *whatsoever* things are lovely, *whatsoever* things are of good report ; if there be *any* virtue, or if there be *any* praise, *think on these things*."—Phil. 4 : 8. That is, give attention to the *practice* of these things. Here, then, we are charged to secure and exemplify *all* that is beautiful and lovely in the christian religion.

It is the more important that Christians should secure all possible completeness, con-

sistency and symmetry of character, because the impenitent are more ready to notice the omissions than the performances of religious duties; and more especially, because they are apt to regard such omissions as evidences of hypocrisy. For the purpose, then, of commending religion to the impenitent, instead of deepening their prejudice against it, the Christian should ever strive to be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing."

4. But many fall far short of this perfection of character, through an erroneous comparison between the importance of duties to God, and duties to men. Some seem to think that, if they are sufficiently punctual in the duties of godliness, they may pay but little regard to the duties of morality. And it is, indeed, true, that duty to God should have our first and fullest attention. The command enjoining it is, therefore, called by Christ "the first and great commandment." We should ever bear it in mind, that such are his high perfections, and such our relations to Him, as our Creator, Upholder, Benefactor, Ruler and Judge—that as all we have to enjoy or suffer here, and all we have to fear or hope for in the world to come, must be

received from him, He should have our supreme affections and our best services. These we should render Him out of principle, as well as out of "respect unto the recompense of the reward," and do it, however much it might prejudice us in the view of our fellow-men. But it will not sink us in the intelligent judgment of any. If they see us rendering, out of principle, the service and affection which we verily believe is due to God, they cannot but honor us for acting thus conscientiously. Indeed, it would sink us in their estimation, if they saw us acting otherwise. We should, therefore, be the more faithful in our service to God, that we may reflect the more honor on his holy religion.

But while we say this, we are aware that many of the impenitent are wont to express no little disgust at those who are zealous in the service of their Maker. Yet we believe that much of this odium might be avoided, by a more quiet and more unobtrusive manner. Many render their acts of religion unnecessarily offensive, by their needless parade or ado, officiousness or egotism. In our private devotions, we are directed not only to "enter into

our closets," but to "shut the door;" that is, to be as retired and secret as possible in performing them. And in our social and public devotions, we should avoid all needless conspicuity. In this, and in all our other duties, we should "seek to be seen of men" no farther than it is necessary to a faithful discharge of them, and a due exemplification of the excellence and worth of religion. And the best way to secure the right *manner*, is to have the right *motive*. Those who desire to "be seen of men," only that they may "have glory of men," will be likely to make an improper display of their professed piety, and thus to defeat their own object, by waking the disgust rather than the praise of others. While those who wish to secure only the approbation and favor of God, and to recommend religion to others, will be likely to do their duties in that quiet and unobtrusive manner which will win for them the approbation and praise of beholders. If they "seek not their own profit, but the profit of many, that they be saved," they will most likely be guided by a sound discretion, in adopting not only the manner, but also the time and circumstances in which they can

make the most favorable impression on others, by discharging their duties to God.

We have said that God should have our supreme love, with our first, best services. Yet we venture to add, that our duties to our fellow-men are no less imperious ; and should have no less of our time and attention. Not, however, that creatures have equal claims with their Creator. Far from it. They have *some* rights, it is true, concerning which they can demand justice at our hands. But these are few. And yet, if we invade even *these*, we sin more against God than against man. For we are bound to respect these human rights, mainly because our Supreme Ruler commands us to do so. Accordingly, when David confessed his most grievous sins against Bathsheba and Uriah, he said to God, "Against thee, thee *only*, have-I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight,"—Ps. 51, meaning that his offence against them was as nothing, in comparison with that of his thereby disobeying his Maker. And according to this, are the words of Paul : "When ye sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, ye sin against Christ."—1 Cor : 8, 12. To this, too, accord his commands :

“Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not unto man.”—Col. 3 : 23, and “that no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter ; because the Lord is the avenger of all such. He, therefore, that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God.”—1 Thess., 4 : 6, 8. Injuries to man, then, are sinful, mainly because they are violations of divine authority, and tend to thwart the benevolent appointments of God. He, therefore, punishes murder as severely as blasphemy.

Here, then, we have the most important reason for giving much attention to the duties of morality. Yet I fear it is overlooked by many. They seem to reason, that as God is infinite, and men finite, therefore if they do their duty to him, it is comparatively unimportant that they do it to others. Whereas, they should consider that this infinite God has enjoined our duties to our fellow men, as solemnly as those to himself ; and that of the ten commandments comprising these duties, more than half of the number relate to morality ; also, that though Christ said the command which included all we owed to God was “the first” and emphatically “great commandment,” yet he added, that the

one which comprises all we owe to men, "is *like* unto it." Mat. 22: 39. It is "like unto it," both in importance and authority.

And there are other reasons why our moral duties should occupy much of our time and attention. One is, that these duties are more numerous and diversified, than those due to God. The latter have but one object, the Lord of all. And our relations to him, though momentous, are few. Consequently, our services to him are correspondingly few in kind and form, though they should be rendered constantly. While the objects of our moral duties are numberless, and our relations to them various. Proportionably numerous and multiform, then, are our duties to our fellow-men. We need, therefore, much care and watchfulness, in order to know what, according to our varying relations, conditions and circumstances, "our hands should find to do;" and no little moral energy, in order to "do it with our might."

Another reason why we should give much, and particular attention to the discharge of our duties to our fellow-men, is that *more notice* is taken of these by others, than of those that are due to God. Much of the service which we

should render to Him, is silent and unseen. And the most of mankind care less how we treat God, than how we treat our fellow-creatures. They spy out with a telescopic and microscopic eye, all the failures of Christians to deal righteously and kindly with their fellow-men, and proclaim them with trumpet tongue. This, then, is a most weighty reason for watching against such failures, lest we bring dishonor on our religion; and for striving to be so faithful in these duties, "that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of us."—Tit. 2 : 8. For in no way can we more effectually convince gainsayers, than by exhibiting a consistent piety toward God, joined with a complete fulfilment of all our domestic, social and moral duties.

But some, we fear, are the more lax in moral duties, for fear that they shall trust to them for salvation. They hear others avowing such reliance, declaring their expectation of heaven because they are industrious and sober, just and kind. They also see such to be the more punctilious in morality, and making more parade of it, because of this expectation. And they seem to think that in order to eschew the dangerous

hope of the moralist, they must eschew also his punctuality in moral duties. Whereas, they need not shun his example, in order to escape his dangerous error. And they are just as much bound to do all their duties to their fellow-men, as if they could gain salvation thereby. They should be urged to them by other motives than their own welfare. They should do them because God commands them, because they "are good and profitable unto men," and because it is necessary to convince others of their sincerity in the service of God. For, as we have just said, the world will judge of a man's religion less by his piety toward God, than by his morality among men. For they will ask with the apostle, "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath *not* seen."—1 John 4: 20. And the more we love and serve God understandingly, the more we should be inclined to love and to benefit our fellow-creatures, both out of regard to his commands, and out of desire to recommend his blessed religion. We should be the more attentive to moral duties, in order to exemplify its tendency to improve the affections, and thus to advance the welfare of humanity.

It is boasted by some churches, that there is more attention to moral duties, especially to civility, sociability and refinement, and less that is harsh and repulsive among *them*, than among the more sternly orthodox. And there is reason to fear that many evangelical Christians are giving too much occasion for such a boast. Yet there is nothing in the creeds or established usages of the orthodox, that is unfavorable to refinement of taste, kindness of heart or suavity of manners. On the contrary, genuine orthodoxy *requires* us to embody in our religion all that is true and honest, all that is just and pure, all that is lovely and of good report. Every evangelical Christian, then, however stern his theology and rigid his morals, should feel himself at liberty, or rather should feel himself *bound* to cultivate all that is lovely in human conduct; all of which is actually done by many whose orthodoxy is most strenuous. And well were it for the honor of Christianity, if it were done by *all*. The more valuable a substance, the more worthy it is of being polished. Why, then, should evangelical piety wear a rough surface?

5. Others, again, are failing to exhibit the

full beauty and loveliness of religion, *by discharging its duties in a faulty manner*. For there are wrong ways of doing right things. And we are required to "abstain" not only from evil itself, but "from all *appearance* of evil."—1 Thess. 5 : 22. Yet many fail to do so. Their manner *seems* to indicate a wrong purpose or motive. Some make so much parade of their piety as to disgust others at their seeming ostentation, self-righteousness, and spiritual pride. Some, in doing good to others, seem in their manner to be "sounding a trumpet before them, that they may have glory of men." And others bestow their gifts in such a way as would show that their purpose was less to benefit the receiver, than to make him feel his dependence and obligation. And, to a delicate mind, the donations thus made are more cruel than kind. Kindness, *to be* kindness, should be done in a kind manner. Nor is the error here alluded to, always intentional. Many have naturally a bustling, pompous manner, against which they are not sufficiently guarded while engaged in good works. Their failure to do their duties in a right way, is the result of culpable inattention. All should be cautious, then, that

what they do is not only right in itself, and is done out of right motives, but is also done in the *proper manner*. It is true, that many are too anxious about appearances. But it is only when they are more anxious to avoid the *appearances* of evil, than of *evil* itself. They seek credit for more goodness than they possess. And in this, they are as unwise as they are wicked. For their false appearances are more easily detected than they suppose. Nor should they expect much credit for their good deeds, if their motives are but *suspected*. We have before said that the possession of the right motive will do much toward securing the right manner. But additional caution is often needed. Yet too many seem to act as if it were enough to be conscious that their intentions are honest and pure. They say, I care not what others think of my conduct, so long as I know that my motives are right. Whereas, if they really wish to benefit another, and thereby to honor religion, it is more important that they do this act of kindness in a way to make a favorable impression on him, than if they did it as too many do, to get advantage of *him* or gain the praise of others. We should not only *have* the

right intentions, but we should strive to act in such a manner as to convince others that we have them. For it is thus that we are to obey the injunction, "Let every one of us please his neighbor for his good to edification."—Rom. 15 : 2. And to fail of doing so, is to disobey the other injunction, "Let not your good be evil spoken of."—Rom. 14 : 16.

6. Others, again, are failing to display the full excellence of religion, *by indulging too much the spirit, and wearing too much the aspect, of despondency and gloom.* With some of these, it is the result, doubtless, of sorrow for sin, and not unfrequently of fear that they have not been forgiven. With others, it is the result of temporal afflictions, of native temperament, or of ill health. But in all such cases, strenuous efforts should be made to prevent it. For the continued appearance of dejection and melancholy in Christians, makes unfavorable impressions on the minds of unbelievers, respecting the nature and influence of religion, leading them to regard it as cheerless and gloomy in its influence.

As to their godly sorrow, and fears of not being forgiven, they should have them more

before God, and less before the world. Or, rather, instead of poring and pondering over them so long, they should "ask" at once, and so earnestly, for pardoning mercy, as assuredly to "receive, that their joy may be full."—John 16: 24. Or, if still in doubt, they should "examine their own selves, whether they are in the faith," whether "Jesus Christ is in them," or whether "they are reprobates."—2 Cor. 13: 5. And if they find they are not yet forgiven, they should at once repent and believe, and thus obtain "a good hope through grace;" nor cease to examine it, till it ends in "the full assurance of hope."—Heb. 6: 11. And though grief has resulted from deep affliction, such as the death of a dear relative, yet, if it continue long, its influence on the impenitent will be injurious. For they will argue, and argue correctly, that if religion be what it claims to be, it should sooner assuage the sorrows of its votaries. There is utterly a fault among some saints, that they "sorrow even as others which have no hope."—1 Thess. 4: 13. Their deep and long continued grief proves too plainly their lack of love to God, and of resignation to his will. They should, therefore, put on at

once that ardent love to God, and that strong confidence in his wisdom and goodness, that would bring them into quiet and sweet resignation to his most afflictive dispensations; and, to say with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." "Though now, for a season—they have been in heaviness through manifold temptations—yet, believing, they should rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."—1 Pet. 1 : 6, 8. They should do so, not only because it is so much more pleasing to God, and useful to themselves, but because they would thereby manifest to others the power and excellency of grace.

Those, again, whose gloominess and dejection are occasioned by native temperament or ill health, are doing dishonor to the religion of the Cross. They ought, therefore, to resist, and, if possible, remove these evil influences. Some are naturally too distrustful and desponding. And they should be aware of it, and should, therefore, strive to exercise more confidence in the goodness and the promises of God, often saying with the Psalmist, "Why art thou cast down, O, my soul? and why art

thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.”—Ps. 42 : 5.

And as that common complaint, dyspepsia, and many other nervous diseases are powerful to depress the mind, it is important that those who are laboring under them, should resist their influence by all possible means, both mental and medical. To be fully aware of their influence, will do much. But resolute mental resistance, will do much more. Yet, sometimes it is needful to call in the aid of the *human*, as well as the Divine physician. But the most of saints in this condition of mind are very unwilling to think their gloominess is occasioned by disease; and, therefore, foster, instead of resisting its influence. Men are led to nourish their melancholy, by the false notion that sadness is holy penitence, and depression of mind is humility of heart, consequently, that to foster them, will make them more godly. But religion is not sorrow and gloom. It is “righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.”—Rom. 14 : 17.

It is the privilege of saints always to *have*, and their duty always to *exhibit*, not only a

cheerful serenity of mind, but a high degree of hope and joy. They are required to "rejoice greatly," and to "rejoice evermore."—1 Thess. 5 : 16 ; 1 Pet. 1 : 6. And this ought they to do, lest they discourage, and thus "offend against the generation of God's children."—Ps. 73 : 15 ; but especially lest they dishonor religion in the view of the ungodly. For it has already suffered too much, because of the apparent sadness of its professors. Many a sinner has resolved to delay the acceptance of salvation, for fear that, if he became a Christian, he must be as unhappy as these gloomy Christians appear to be. All saints, therefore, should strive to be "always rejoicing," to show that religion is a source of happiness instead of sadness, and thereby to persuade the impenitent to embrace salvation without delay.

But the word *cheerfulness* has another meaning, which deserves some attention in this connection. It denotes a grace which is allied to cordiality, or hearty good will ; as when we are required to "show mercy with *cheerfulness*," that is, to "use hospitality one to another, without grudging."—Rom. 12 : 8 ; 1 Pet. 4 : 9. And for the want of this grace, many fail to

exemplify all the excellencies of the christian religion. When they contribute of their substance, for the temporal or spiritual good of others, they do it with such apparent reluctance, or at best, under so much force of conscience as to rob their benefactions of much of their value; and as to defeat the good impression which they might otherwise make. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." No duty done to himself, or others, will he accept, if it be grudgingly discharged. Nor will it secure the full applause of men, if it be done by evident constraint. If, therefore, we would duly recommend our religion to the world, we should make it evident that all our liberalities and labors for God and man, are the hearty outgushings of love and good will.

And there are many other graces in which Christians are apt to be deficient, and whose deficiencies are most apt to be noticed by the impenitent. They are the gentler virtues, such as *charity* and *patience*, *meekness* and *mercy*, *forbearance* and *forgiveness*. We need not notice them apart. It is enough to notice them collectively. Since the ungodly have less regard to God and His kingdom, than to man's

temporal welfare, they pay most attention to that portion of the Christian's conduct which is "good and profitable unto men" in the present life. And as we know them to be watching us most narrowly as to these graces, we should be the more careful to exhibit them all. Instead of thinking it enough to have *part* of them in exercise, we should regard Christ as still saying to us, "These things ought ye to have done, and not to leave the others undone." We should exhibit all of them, that we may avoid a repulsive inconsistency of character, and that we may render ourselves most "acceptable to God, and *approved of men*."—Rom. 14: 18. This is the more important, because when the impenitent see these graces exemplified by Christians, they will feel the more condemned for their own lack of them, and be the more effectually convinced of the excellency of that religion which raises the Christian's character so much above their own. Still more important is it that *we* should abound in these graces, because so many of our brethren are defective in them. For we need to "make up their lack of service;" or, rather to rescue Christianity from the reproach which the imperfections of others have brought upon it.

7. Other Christians fail to exemplify the full excellence of religion, *by the deficiency of their love and kindness and charity towards each other*. These graces are among the richest ornaments of Christianity, and the strongest proofs of a sincere profession. Said the Psalmist, "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."—Ps. 133 : 1. And said Christ, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."—John 13 : 35. And the impenitent are very quick to notice the professor's defects in these things, pronouncing him, on that account, a hypocrite. Yet how little love and charity is manifest among some professors of the same denomination, and even of the same Church ; and how much less among those of different denominations.

This deficiency is often the result of *suspicion* or *prejudice*. One brother is alienated from another, because he suspects the latter has injured him, when, in fact, no maltreatment was intended ; and when a little candid investigation would set them at one again. But more generally does the coolness result from *prejudice*. One brother, who is of a sluggish, uni-

form temperament, has no confidence in the piety of another who is impulsive, impassioned and rhapsodical; and charges him with enthusiasm and wildfire. While, on the other hand, this emotional brother, when his zeal is much excited, has no confidence in the piety of him who is more calm and deliberate. Whereas, the fervor of the impulsive one may be a purely christian zeal. Or, though much of it be merely the ebullition of "animal feelings," so called, yet a large share of it may be truly gracious, and, therefore, should not be discarded because of the foreign affection with which it is commingled. For, be it remembered that gold is gold, however much it is mingled with rock or sand. So, too, the brother of more quiet and uniform mould, may have very intense feeling, though he makes but little ado about it. "Deep sink the waters that are smooth and still." And, considering his uniformity, he may have, on the whole, as great an amount of zeal as he who has at times a higher, yet evanescent ardor. Besides, there are different ways of expressing emotions. Some do it by impassioned language, some by obstructed utterance, some by tears, and others by dry,

but kindling eyes. We should beware, then, how we accuse others with having a false or a deficient zeal, because they do not express theirs as we express ours.

But many professors of religion are slow to search out the *good* conduct of their fellows, while, like the world, they are quick to notice their defects. Some seem to think the best way for them to prove their piety, and to promote the purity of the Church, is to hunt up and expose the faults of others. But though reproof and discipline are sometimes needful, they should be attempted by those only who pluck the beam from their own eye, before they "pull out the mote out of their brother's eye." Yet, those who are most inclined to censure others, are, generally, most censurable themselves. They are, therefore, not inaptly called, like the father of all evil, "the accusers of the brethren." If such would make as much effort to discover, imitate and recommend the *graces* of their brethren, as they do to detect and expose their *faults*, they would do much more to benefit themselves and the Church. And they ought to see that it is not their piety, but their remaining depravity, which inclines

them to search out the vices so much more than the virtues of their fellow-men. For "Charity rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." Love should lead them to see how much *good*, and not how much evil, they can find in the people of God.

If professors of religion would notice as candidly as they ought, all the good qualities of their brethren, the result would be happy indeed. It would bring many now at variance, "to love one another with a pure heart, fervently;" and thus make them much more happy. And it would keep others from those alienations, animosities and contentions, by which the Church is often disgraced in the eye of the world. Again, the more Christians were to contemplate the excellent traits of character in others, the more they would imitate them. The more, therefore, would they exemplify to the ungodly the beauty and loveliness of the christian religion. Here, then, is an important means of growing in grace, and of becoming more useful to the impenitent. It is that of copying all that is excellent in the good of all ages. We should "search the Scriptures," therefore, for the purpose, among other

things, of following the good examples of "holy men of old;" and, especially the perfect ones of "the man Christ Jesus." Nor, are Scripture examples the only ones that claim our attention! We should search out all that we can read of in biography, or can see in the lives of our cotemporaries. And many is the saint who can find in others, less pious than himself, some excellencies of which he is destitute, and which, therefore, he needs to copy. By due attention to the conduct of others, Christians might correct many faults, and supply many defects, in their own characters, and thus might exhibit more fully to the world the beauty and loveliness of the christian religion.

8. Others fail to display these excellencies, by *their habits of indolence and idleness*. We saw in the previous chapter that industry is a christian virtue, and is highly esteemed among men, while idleness is an odious vice. Yet many professors of religion live in such habitual idleness as to bring reproach upon the followers of Christ. They need therefore to be cautioned against being thus "slothful in business," lest they thereby injure the cause which they profess to love.

It is not merely as a *punishment*, that man was required to "eat bread" by "the sweat of his face." It is a beneficial duty to himself and others. Somebody must toil to procure the necessities and comforts of life. Nor can it be right for any who can work, to live in idleness upon the labors of others. But we mean not to say that all should be operatives in the house, or shop or field. For there is a multitude of useful and necessary employments besides those in which the hands are engaged. All we insist upon is, that all who are able should earn in some honest way their own livelihood, and not live needlessly upon the earnings of others. But there are many in the *present*, as there were in the primitive Church, who are "working not at all," to whom, therefore, the same injunction of the apostle applies: "Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they *work*, and eat their *own* bread."—2 Thess. 3 : 11, 12. They, then, who are living in idleness, at the expense of others, are doing it in violation of divine authority, and are thereby dishonoring the christian name.

There are two objectionable methods which

many who profess to be Christians employ, for the purpose of living needlessly at the expense of others. One is the practice of *begging*. Many are the pious poor who have been reduced by misfortune to helplessness and want. And such have strong claims on the commiseration and bounty of their christian brethren. But others there are who are brought to beggary by indolence, carelessness and waste. And such bring no small discredit upon religion in the eyes of the world. It is, therefore, the solemn duty of all the people of God, to keep themselves, as much as by diligence and frugality they can, from being burdensome to others, and especially to the ungodly. Voluntary mendicity may be honorable among Papists, but not among Protestants.

The other method is no less wicked and base than begging, although it is often so regarded. Nay, in some respects it is more mean, as it takes, without a direct and free consent, and abuses that pliant good nature which makes denial difficult. It hardly has a name; but is a kind of *silent* begging. It is sometimes called "hanging on," and sometimes "sponging." There is many a case, it is true, in which broth-

erly love and christian hospitality on the one hand, and a desire of social religious intercourse on the other, may justify us in prolonging our stay with our christian brother ; and the more so, if the time is to be devoted to special religious services. But it would be the more base to make these our pretense, when our real object is to get our living out of another. We should be careful, then, not to incur the suspicion of such meanness, lest we bring dishonor on Christianity.

Paul teaches idleness to be so great a sin, that "if any would not work, neither should he eat."—2 Thess. 3 : 10. And elsewhere he intimates, that those who live in idleness on others are virtually guilty of stealing. He says, "Let him that stole, steal no more, *but* rather let him *labor, working* with his own hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."—Eph. 4 : 28. The alternative here is, *theft* or *labor*. In the former passage, we are required to labor for our *own* support, and in this we are taught, that instead of living needlessly on the labors of others, which is a virtual theft, we should *work*, not merely to support ourselves, but that

we may contribute to the support of those who are helpless and needy. *Stealing* is used in this passage in the wide sense of the Decalogue. The commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," is evidently a prohibition of all unrighteous gains, including, therefore, our living needlessly at the expense of others. But Christians should avoid living in idleness, not only because it is so pointedly forbidden, but also because it is so much detested by the men of the world; and because by proper diligence, they can have wherewith to promote the temporal and spiritual welfare of their fellow men, and at the same time do the more to honor Christianity.

It may, however, be insisted by some, that those who have wealth enough to support them through life are not bound to labor. But Christ teaches us that none should say to themselves, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease;"—Luke 12: 19, 20; while Paul says, "Charge them that be rich in this world"—that they—"be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate."—1 Tim. 6: 17, 18. And if the poor, who need to toil for their *own* support, are required to toil also that they "may have

to give to him that needeth," should not the rich do the same? Certainly. If they have only enough for their own support, they should earn what they can for the needy. If they have more, they should give what they can spare from their abundance, and labor to gain more for that purpose. Else they should occupy what time they can spare in searching out the most needy, and most worthy objects of charity, and in bestowing most judiciously their bounty upon them; or in doing good by other personal efforts. For many are the wants and woes of mankind, which the rich have the most ability and leisure to relieve. If, then, they would imitate the good man of Uz, how much they might lessen the sufferings, and augment the happiness of their fellow men. And if they could say in truth with him, "When the ear heard me, it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me; and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor;

and the cause which I knew not, I searched out. I broke the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth ;"—Job 29 : 11-17 ; how much they would have increased their own happiness, as well as that of others ; but what is more, how much they would illustrate and adorn the christian religion. Or if they would imitate the man of New Bedford, who spends all his time in distributing his own bounty, and that which others intrust to him, to relieve the needy and the suffering, how much they might benefit themselves ; and how much more they might benefit the bodies and souls of their fellow men.

But how many feel themselves under no obligation to be industrious, because they are rich, while in truth they have nothing which they can rightly call their own.—1 Chron. 29 : 14. They are but stewards. What they hold is put into their hands by the supreme Proprietor, not that they may live in idleness, but that they may do good with it, till he shall come to "reckon with them." Their time, talents and treasures were *never* their own ; much less since they have been "bought with a price." Every Christian, whether rich or

poor, is bound to "do with his might what his hands find to do," for the glory of God and the good of man. A vast amount of such labor needs to be done. And if all the rich and influential members of our Churches would labor as assiduously in the *vineyard of the Lord* as they do in the field of political strife, or in many other secular concerns, there is no computing the good they might accomplish. Many of our wealthy and pious ladies are acting nobly, and are accomplishing incalculable good. But how much more would be done, if all of this class would be equally active and bountiful. We would humbly suggest to the many female members of our Churches, who are living in wealth and indolence, that if, like their noble sisters just alluded to, they would give as much time and effort to the work of christian benevolence, as they do to the gayeties and pleasures of fashionable life, they would be far more happy, as well as far more useful, to say nothing of their final reward.* The faithful

*Indolence is a blot on the character, as well as a bane to the health of our fashionable females. An English traveller remarks, "I was utterly astonished at the idleness of American fine ladies. No English woman of rank, with the exceptions of a few parvenues, (that is, upstarts,) from the Queen downward, would remain one-half hour unemployed."

efforts and examples of rich Christians of both sexes, would be powerful in proportion to their position in life. They would greatly counteract the evil example of the many drones that nestle in our Churches, by showing to the best advantage, that the tendency of our religion is to rouse men from indolence, and to make them "not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Never was there a louder call for lay labor in the Gospel field. May this call be heard by many who have not yet heeded *the curse* pronounced upon Meroz.—Judges 5 : 23. Especially may it be heard by those who have most ability and leisure for "the help of the Lord against the mighty."

9. As we have been speaking of one way in which the rich are apt to fail of exemplifying the full excellence of religion, this, perhaps, is the best connection in which to speak of another way in which many of them make the like failure. *It is the way in which they employ their surplus wealth.* They claim (what the Gospel denies them,) a right to do what they will with their own, a right to use it just as sinners generally use *their* wealth. They often lavish needlessly, nay, injuriously, upon

their children or other favorites, what might carry relief to many a suffering household. Often, too, do they lavish uselessly on costly mansions and equipage, dress, and the like extravagances, what would go far to build up and extend the kingdom of Christ in the world. And this evil is aggravated by emulation. God's rich ones vie with Satan's, and with each other; while the poor strive to appear rich by the like extravagance. Nor do these costly outlays generally add to the comfort of those who make them; but are often valued merely because they are so expensive.

Such prodigality could scarcely be practiced by those who are properly imbued with humility, properly weaned from the world, and properly devoted to God. It is wrong, because it manifests much of that pride and worldliness which is noticed and condemned by saint and sinner, as unbecoming the professedly meek and lowly followers of Christ. It is wrong, because we are bound to spend our money in that way in which we can do most for God's glory, and man's welfare. And, if that which is thus wasted by the rich, were properly expended, how much good it might accomplish

in sending relief to the wretched, and the Gospel to the perishing. Enough is sometimes paid for a single unnecessary garment, to support a minister for a year in some needy and destitute parish. Enough is sometimes expended to provide for a fashionable party, to supply all the destitute families of many a city with the Word of Life. Some professors spend enough yearly in various needless extravagances, to support several missionaries among the perishing millions in heathen lands. And this is the more to be regretted, as so many thousands are asking for the Gospel, and have to be denied, because the necessary funds are wanting.

Some may say, by way of apology for these lavish Christians, that we should not expect them to live as cheap and plain as the poor. But we do not deny it to be proper for them to live in all needful elegance and comfort. We do not ask them to be parsimonious and mean in their style of living. What we would condemn, is their needless *excess*. We believe that many of our wealthy Christians could live in a style of sufficient convenience and splendor, and yet save out of their present expenses a vast amount to be expended in the cause of

God and humanity. Nor do we know by what authority the rich Christian may increase his needless expenses according to the increase of his possessions or gains. We believe, that according to the rules of christian stewardship, all he can claim is what is needful for the comfort and respectability of himself, and of his family. All the rest is due to religion and charity. And if it be said these rich and extravagant professors are giving much already for man's temporal and spiritual welfare, we reply, that the question is not, whether they give little or much; but whether they give all that is needed, all that God requires? Could they not live just as happily, and yet give far more for the relief of the needy and suffering, and for the salvation of the perishing?

But the evil of extravagance which we would here mainly insist upon, is the prejudice which it creates in the minds of the impenitent. Such pride and worldliness as these professors are thought to manifest by their princely style of living, cannot but affect the enemies of the Cross most unfavorably. They have reason to expect there will be a marked difference in the style of living, between the rich saint and the

rich sinner. And if they find none, they say to Christians, "What do ye more than others? Either you are hypocrites, or your religion is a delusion." Whereas, if they saw the proper difference between the wealthy Christian and other rich ones, it would be a striking proof to them of the reality and power of religion. We would, therefore, solemnly urge these extravagant professors seriously to consider whether they are living as if they had "learned of Him who is meek and *lowly*." We are the more earnest on this point, because their positions are so conspicuous, and their example on this account is the more potent, especially among the impenitent poor, whose prejudice is apt to be embittered by envy. We rejoice, that some of God's rich ones have right apprehensions of their responsibility in this matter, and are acting accordingly. They are acting nobly. They are accomplishing much. They are now highly honored for their princely munificence. But a far higher reward awaits them. Why will not more "go and do likewise?"

10. But others fail of exemplifying religion, not by lavishing their wealth, *but by hoarding it up*. They accumulate their thousands, and

let them lie idle; or use them to gain more that will also be idle and useless. Yet as all their silver and gold belong to the Lord of hosts,—Hag. 2: 8, what right have they to do with them as the servant did with his single talent, to lay them up in bags, or bury them in their vaults? It is of money as of manure, that it does no good while lying in the heap. And what vast piles of money are lying useless in the coffers of those who profess to follow Christ. Those thus hoarding them, are in some respects worse than those who are lavish of their funds. Both are idolators, the former worshiping Mammon in the form of money, the latter idolizing the luxuries which their money brings. But the profuse and prodigal may be said to be doing some good by giving employment to the needy, while the miserly do not. This is often urged as a sufficient excuse for the extravagance of the rich. But it is evidently a lame one. For the extra labor which they pay the poor to perform, is not in the proper sense *productive*. That is, it does not add to what is necessary to the support and solid comfort of man. If instead of paying men for furnishing them with costly habitations

and furniture, with expensive carriages and clothing, and the like, they would pay them for public improvements, and for bettering the condition of the poor, for increasing the productions of the earth, and for advancing the useful arts, they might claim to be benefactors: but not in paying for labors that are expended on themselves, and that do not increase even *their own* substantial welfare; especially, as their only real object is not the good of others, but their *own* gratification. But a miserly hoarding up of wealth is worse, because it shrinks the *social*, and intensifies the *selfish* affections; and worst of all, because it keeps so much of the Lord's treasures from being employed as he requires, that is, in doing good. And yet we see in the Church, many a rich and *pious miser*, (pardon the misnomer,) who not only fails to manifest all the excellence of religion, but greatly dishonors it in the view of the world. They will either regard him as a hypocrite, or insist that religion is powerless and vain. For how can they think that he has laid up his treasures in heaven, while his heart is so evidently among his treasures on earth? As they find he "seeth his brother hath need,

and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him," they will say, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?"—1 John 3: 17. Or they will say, "If this man is a Christian, Christianity is vain." It were well for our religion, if conversion had the same effect on all its rich professors as it had on Zaccheus, Joses, Luke 8: 19, Acts 4: 36, and on other converts of apostolic times. And many of them might give half their goods to the poor; and others might sell much of their houses and lands, and give the prices of them to advance the cause of Christ, without any real injury to their present welfare. Nor would they do good in this way by their bounty alone. Their example would be most powerful in commending religion to thousands that are exposed to wrath by the want of it.

Of those who are accumulating vast estates, there are some, it is true, who do it under the real or pretended intention of giving them at death to the cause of benevolence. But they are commanded to "do good to all," not when they can hold their riches no longer, but "*as they have opportunity.*" And how much more good they might do with their wealth, if they

would give out portions of it all along in life, as they see it is most needed, or that it would accomplish most for religion and humanity. Besides, they know not how soon their riches may take to themselves wings and fly away. They had better use them therefore for good, while they possess them. Many have had occasion to rejoice that they were bountiful while they had the means. And more have had occasion to lament that they had not devoted to benevolent and pious purposes the thousands which they once possessed, but which they have subsequently lost. Why do they withhold what they see is so much needed now to relieve the distressed, and save the lost? Why, but for the wish to worship it a little longer, or to have the vain honor of dying rich, and of leaving noted legacies? And while acting thus, their example is deplorably evil; whereas, if they would imitate the liberality of the rich saints of old, their example would be most powerful for good. Some of our rich men of the world are giving, in their lifetime, their thousands to found and support important secular institutions. And why should not all the rich in our Churches be equally liberal toward

religious institutions? As, then, our wealthy believers are able to do more than others, both to aid and to honor religion, their responsibility is the greater. But of this responsibility we fear that many of them are sadly unmindful. We are constrained, therefore, to "beseech them by the mercies of God," and by his rich bounty to them, that they give the subject a fuller consideration.

11. Others fail of commending religion, through their want of a *readiness* and a *reputation* for doing good to others. The foregoing remarks apply only to the rich, while the following relate to all, the high and the low, the rich and the poor. All Christians are commanded "to be *ready* to every good work."—Tit. 3: 1. If they cannot make large contributions of time and treasure to religious benevolence, they should imitate the poor widow whom Christ commended, and *do what they can*. And this "good" should be done not only to our connections, whether domestic or ecclesiastical, but to all; though "especially unto them who are of the household of faith;" and not only at times, "when the fit takes us," but always, "as we have opportunity."—Gal. 6: 10. For

“to be *ready* for every good work,” is to be habitually disposed to do all that is needed, and all that we can perform.

But how many professors of religion are ignoring, at least in practice, this important duty. They seem to think that after seeking salvation, and going a brief round of religious services, their chief duty is to secure wealth and ease, pomp and pleasure, honor and advancement in the present world. How many in our Churches, who, instead of seeking first and mainly the kingdom of heaven, are asking, not only, “What shall we eat? what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?” but “what can we get that will most delight our palate? what is the newest fashion? what style of dress will gain us most admiration, or rank us highest in the fashionable world?” in short, “How shall we secure the most earthly pleasure, and make the best figure in the flesh?” How many of them talk of little else. How many of them speak little, and care less, about the needy and suffering around them. If they read at all about human sufferings, it is not to learn who is in want of aid, but to gratify their love of excitement by high wrought

descriptions of fictitious woes—woes which they need not, and cannot relieve. And let it not be thought that the reading of such fiction softens the heart, and increases compassion for the suffering. It has the opposite effect. The sight of suffering, in order to amend the heart, should call out present efforts for its relief. But the contemplation of imaginary sufferings which mock relief, tend by familiarity to harden the heart. We would gladly be convicted of overstepping the truth in this sad description. But we fear we have fallen short of it.

Yet there are many in our Churches, and would to God there were multitudes more, who not only “do good as *they have opportunity*,” but who *make* opportunities. They are “the liberal who devise liberal things.”—Isa. 32: 8. They are always hunting up occasions, and inventing plans, by which they and others may do good. How noble and lovely are those who live mainly to relieve the sufferings, and enhance the enjoyments of their fellow men, and to help forward the work of man’s salvation, as compared with those who live to themselves, live for sensuality and show. They are the true philanthropists, and people of worth,

be their wealth and talents great or small. Nor are they the less happy and prosperous. They have the promise of God by his prophet, that if they devise liberal things, "by liberal things they shall stand." Christ tells us, "It is more blessed to give, than to receive."—Acts 20: 35. And it will be generally found that those are prosperous and happy, who are most "ready to every good work."

But this personal benefit is not the motive which we would mainly urge for faithfulness in this duty. No, nor yet the good which it does to its immediate objects. We urge the duty mostly, because it tends so much to recommend that religion which brings salvation. A confirmed readiness to engage in all good works, is itself a lovely grace, and a rich ornament to the religion which requires and promotes it. It conciliates the affections of those to whom we do good, and disposes them to look with more favor on our other graces. And nothing will make them listen so favorably to our advice, as the fact that we have been uniformly kind to them, and have bestowed upon them some valuable favor. This readiness to do good, will call kindred graces into more frequent and

full exercise, and thus more fully display the beauties of religion.

Yet a *reputation* for being uniformly "ready to every good work," is needful to secure its full power. Though we were ever so kind to others, they would not give us full credit for it, if they doubted the goodness of our motives. Whereas, if they have full confidence in the uniform kindness of our heart and conduct, they would give us full credit for every specific effort to do them good, and for all our kindred conduct. If, then, we would do all we can to recommend religion to the world, we should strive to establish an unquestionable *reputation* of being always ready to benefit our fellow men. But here it will probably be asked, "How is such a reputation to be won?" To this question we can only reply for the present, that one necessary and important means of securing it, is to manifest, at *all times*, a readiness to "do good to all, as we have opportunity." Without such a manifestation, we cannot have the full confidence of any, and with it we can soon secure the confidence of all.

12. We have but one way more to mention, in which Christians fail to show the full ex-

cellence of religion. It is by *failing to manifest a uniform sincerity in all religious duties, and a uniform good will in all their acts of benevolence.* We have been speaking mainly, hitherto, of the externals of religion. But the internal graces now named, are necessary to give these externals all their excellency. The need of sincerity is the more evident, as nothing but apparent reality can make a favorable impression. Counterfeits are the more unsafe, as they are easily and often detected, as even suspicion defeats them, and detection renders them positively odious. And the only sure way of *appearing* sincere, is *to be* sincere. For, if we act out of a good and honest heart, our good intention will be our best security for a right manifestation. What is done "in simplicity and godly sincerity," will be surest to be done in such a way as will secure the approval of others. Nor can we expect "the outside of the cup and the platter to be clean," unless "the inside is clean also." We should be careful, therefore, to have our internal affections in perfect accordance with our external conduct. And this caution is needed both by saint and sinner. For the best of us are but

imperfectly sanctified. Too much of that heart which is "deceitful above all things," remains in man after his conversion. And they who have the least of it, generally see and deplore it most. To be "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile," is a rare attainment. Nor can it be denied, that many a professor of religion exposes himself to the charge of sometimes acting deceitfully, whereby religion is dishonored. And as all are tempted at times to deceive, there is the more need of caution. Besides, as remarked in the foregoing paragraph, we need an unblemished *reputation*, in order to recommend religion most effectually. We should therefore labor to establish it. And here we come to another means by which a good reputation is to be secured. It is always *to be*, what we would *seem* to be: *always*, since *to be* sincere is the surest way to appear so: and *always*, since if we are seen to be deceitful in one instance, we shall be suspected of it in others. It is thus that we should cultivate such a transparency of character as will set us above suspicion, and confirm our reputation for invariable sincerity. We should strive to be what the late Dr. Cooley *was*. "Nobody

who knew him ever suspected of him any sinister purpose, or feared the least injustice at his hands." For this grace is of itself a rich ornament of religion, and sets off its other graces to the better advantage.

A reputation for exercising a love of constant good will to others, is not more important than that of sincerity; and yet we shall need to give it a more extended notice. Goodwill should prompt to all good works. Nor shall we have credit for any kind actions that are not supposed to spring from true benevolence of heart. For counterfeit kindness will generally be detected and detested. Nor can it be fully appreciated while there is any suspicion of selfishness respecting it. Hence there is the same need of establishing a *reputation* for good will, as for sincerity. And both are to be done in the same way, that is, by the invariable exercise and exhibition of the appropriate grace.

It may not be amiss to notice in this connection, some of the ways in which many fail to manifest true christian benevolence, but which are seldom investigated. One is by acting from impulse, without regard to principle.

Tenderness, sympathy, compassion, are natural affections, and have much the same properties in man and in beasts. Nor are they *christian virtues*, any farther than they are under the guidance of *christian principles*. It is often said in the praise of some very bad men, that they have some noble impulses. But the same may be said of the mastiff, and other fierce animals. Blind pity prompts some to give a begging stranger what was previously promised to a needy creditor, and to waste on the worthless what suffering virtue needs. Indeed, there is so much of this sickly, ill-directed tenderness, to be seen, that it often places genuine christian benevolence at a discount. Nor can we expect the impenitent to give religion due credit for our kindness, until they see that it results from pious regard to duty, and not from that impulsive pity, and lavish generosity, for which some men of the world are noted. If, then, we would not fail to exemplify and honor religion by our works of kindness and love, we should show them to be the offspring of christian principle, and not of animal impulse.

Another way in which some Christians fail, and worse than fail to manifest this grace is

by amusing and sporting themselves with the misfortunes of others. How many laugh at the mortifying mistakes, the unavoidable deformities, and the dangerous falls of others, while these things are sufficiently painful to the sufferers, without their being made a laughing stock to others on account of them. When any slip, or stumble and fall, they often suffer severely. Yet their first act after rising, is usually to look around to ascertain whether any one saw them fall. And why so? Because they are aware that many are accustomed to laugh at such accidents; and because they dread the ridicule worse than the fall. Samuel Dixon, a member of Congress from Albany, N. Y., died May 3d, 1858, of a spinal complaint, occasioned by missing his chair as he was sitting down. And as it is common for many to laugh at such an accident, it is not improbable that his death was heralded by such a roar of merriment.

If those who are given to such sport will not be taught its impropriety by the Word of God, they surely should be by the words of Chesterfield. But it is more than impoliteness. It is absolute cruelty. Christian benevolence

forbids our finding amusement or pleasure in the sufferings of any sentient being. It requires us to "regard the life," and thus the sufferings, even "of a beast."—Prov. 12: 10. Especially does it require us to compassionate our suffering fellow men, "weeping with those that weep"—not ridiculing and laughing at them. If there is anything that indicates a depraved taste and a foul heart, it is a susceptibility to delight in the sufferings of others. Yet how many justify themselves in such delight, calling it *innocent amusement*. And innocent amusement it is, if there is such a thing as *innocent cruelty*. But, they say they feel no *ill will* towards those at whose sufferings they laugh. Neither does the robber feel any towards those whom he would murder for their gold. And he has as good a right to be gratified at the expense of another's pocket, as they have to be gratified at the expense of another's mortification or pain. Yet some attempt to justify themselves by saying, they cannot help laughing at these ludicrous misfortunes. Then they are the more sinful and abased. For it is not God who has made them thus incapable of self-control; but the past indulgence of a

corrupt propensity, which conscience should have forced them to abhor and resist, till they *could* "help it." Yet what is worse, is, that some glory over that propensity which they ought to lament, and are trying to elicit the participation and applause of others, by reciting cases in which they have chuckled at the calamities of others. But though this propensity were "highly esteemed among men," it is an "abomination in the sight of God."—Luke 16: 15. Persons of this habit cannot commend themselves to the considerate, much less to those whom they thus mal-treat, or to the friends of such, as persons of genuine benevolence. Nor will such persons so readily appreciate their other good conduct. How pernicious the practice, then, of sporting with the calamities of others.

But many go farther. They are in the habit of amusing themselves by tricks and falsehoods to deceive and frighten others. Any pain thus intentionally inflicted, is cruelty *direct*; while any *delight* in such suffering, is cruelty *wanton*. But the practice is the more to be condemned, because many by means of it have been deprived even of reason and of life. Well, then,

did Solomon say, "As a mad man casteth firebrands, arrows and death, so is the man who deceiveth his neighbor, and saith, Am not I in sport?"—Prov. 26: 18, 19. And as an appetite for these and the foregoing amusements and sports is incompatible with the benignity and love, the compassion, pity, and tenderheartedness which Christianity teaches and promotes, the more it is indulged in, the more it excludes these excellent and lovely graces. Nor can the Christian abound in them any farther than he resists and overcomes this foul propensity. Much less can he so manifest these graces as properly to commend himself and religion to the world, while he is known to delight in seeing others unhappy, and especially in making them so. If, then, he would sufficiently abound in these mild graces, and exhibit them advantageously to others, he must abstain from such amusements and sports. He must abstain from needlessly distressing even the lower animals. Such of them as are needful for the help of man, he may put to toil. And such of them as are needed for his food, or are noxious to him, he may put to death; but no others; nor these for his mere amuse-

ment and pleasure. Christians may fish and fowl for food or gain, but not for mere amusement. Let a Nero, but not a follower of the Savior, delight in killing flies. All cruel amusements tend to harden the heart, and sink the character. And all such evil influence should be studiously avoided, because it is so detrimental to ourselves, and hence to the honor of religion.

In urging Christians to exhibit all the Gospel graces, we have often had occasion to advert to the *motives* which should prompt them to be thus faithful. But on concluding our subject, it may not be amiss to present these motives in a more compact and powerful array. All of them are summed up in *obligation*, *interest*, and *usefulness*. We should be effectually urged to each and every act of morality and godliness by the simple consideration, that God, in the plenitude of his authority, has positively commanded it; and that by virtue of the relations in which we stand to him and his creatures, it is undeniably due from us. And though there were no other motive, we should do each duty from the bare consideration that we are *bound* to do it. We should do it cheer-

fully, even though it should be "to our own hurt."

But an additional motive is found in the fact, that such obedience, instead of being detrimental to ourselves, is in the end absolutely profitable. Experience confirms the apostle's declaration, that "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;" and that "Godliness with contentment is *great gain*." Each "doer of the work" is "blessed *in* his deed." He finds enjoyment in the very act. And in acts of justice and kindness he "commends himself to every man's conscience in the sight of God," thus gaining approbation and respect. Again, in the discharge of these duties, he "purifies his soul by obeying the truth through the Spirit."—1 Pet. 1: 22. And thus he gains a growth in grace which fits him for the better discharge of duty, and for higher enjoyment both here and hereafter. For the more faithfully he performs his duty on earth, the greater will be his reward in heaven. Many seem to think they cannot *afford* to perform certain duties to God and man; whereas, so great would be their reward for doing them, that

they cannot well afford to *neglect* them. Interest alone, then, were an all-sufficient motive to abound in all religious duties.

Yet we would have it ever kept in mind, that the motive to duty on which we would *now* most insist, is our *usefulness*. The more we exemplify the beauty and loveliness of religion, the more shall we promote the declarative glory of God ; for, the more will men “see our good works, and glorify our Father which is in heaven.” Nor should we be a little useful thereby. Again, many of the christian graces tend greatly to ameliorate the condition of our fellow men. And if all would act as kindly toward each other as Christianity requires, all earth would become a blooming Eden. Yet it is neither of these kinds of usefulness that we now mainly urge. It is that of convincing the impenitent of the beauty and the loveliness of religion, thereby persuading them to embrace it, and thus to secure salvation without delay.

Many Christians express much desire to be useful, and much regret that they are not able. They say they wish they had money to relieve the wants of the poor at home, and to send the

Gospel to the destitute abroad ; or that they had leisure and strength to distribute religious tracts, and to visit the sick and suffering. While others express a wish that they had learning and talents, that they might teach the wandering the way of life everlasting. They say, "If we could only become ministers, or missionaries, we would gladly spend and be spent in turning men from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." But they seem to think, that as they are *situated*, they can do nothing for the spiritual good of their fellow men. Whereas, all Christians are able, and are bound to do much. Though "silver and gold they have none," they can manifest their sympathy and good will to the destitute and suffering, by kind words, looks and actions. And these would not be a little soothing to many an aching heart. Many on making the trial, would find they had more ability and means of doing good than they were aware of. One means is *prayer*. For it is a sad mistake to suppose that men are to be brought to salvation only through the officially authorized preaching of the Gospel. Without the effectual influence of the Holy Spirit, Paul

may plant and Apollos may water in vain; which influence is to be secured by prayer. And how many conversions have occurred of late in answer to intercessions for those on whom no other means of grace were employed. Nor is it enough, that this influence be sought in the public assembly and the social circle. It should be done in the closet, and wherever a silent ejaculation can be sent up to heaven for regenerating grace. And for this blessing, the most obscure and unlearned may wrestle as effectually with the Angel of the covenant, as the ablest theologian. For prayer avails only as it is holy, fervent and importunate. Since private Christians, then, are far more numerous than ministers, every one of whom is bound to be as fervent in spirit as those who "preach the Word," they might accomplish by this means a vast amount of good.

Another way in which private Christians might promote the salvation of sinners, is by recommending religion in conversation and letters. Many by equal faithfulness, might have equal success with Harlan Page, who had the rich satisfaction of hoping on his death-bed, that he had thus been instrumental in the con-

version of one hundred immortal souls. But a more striking case of success has more lately come to light. It was related by an aged clergyman in one of the Fulton Street, daily prayer-meetings, that a man who was converted at the age of 70, and lived but two years afterwards, yet said on his death-bed he could remember over one hundred who had been converted through his instrumentality. And should not many others "go and do likewise?"

But we would not recommend that such means be employed indiscriminately. Like the latter person mentioned above, we should look about to see whom we could most probably bring to Christ, selecting such as would be most likely to heed our advice; such, that is, as are most favorably disposed towards us, and over whom we should probably have most influence. And these will generally be found among our nearest relatives and dearest friends, those who are most in our employ, or those to whom we have shown most kindness. We should seize, moreover, on times and circumstances in which they are most thoughtful and tender; and strive to address them in ways likely to offend them least, and thus to profit

them most. Often the best efforts are indirect, and apparently incidental. It is more emphatically true respecting religion, than other concerns, that

“Men must be taught as though you taught them not;
And things unknown, proposed as things forgot.”

We should be careful, too, not to disgust by the frequency and length of our communications, but strive to say as much to the point as we can in few words. It is often best to speak of the beauty and happiness of religion, and the necessity of it to salvation, without immediately urging its acceptance. But eventually there should follow, if opportunity permit, a direct and urgent entreaty, that the conditions of mercy should be complied with, definitely and without delay.

But that we may seek by these means, the salvation of our fellow men most successfully, we need to have all the christian graces in full and constant exercise. For they will give us more spiritual life and energy, thus making us more earnest and solemn, more vigorous and persevering in our instructions and exhortations; while at the same time, they will make us more tender of the feelings of those whose

salvation we seek, and more careful not needlessly to wound them. They will likewise commend us more to their consciences, convincing them more of the honesty and kindness of our efforts, and thus constraining them to respect the more our character and counsels. Whereas, if they found our habitual conduct did not correspond with our profession, they would have but little confidence in the truth and importance of what we say in behalf of religion.

But we can influence many by our example, whom we cannot reach by our voice. And it is this kind of usefulness on which we would mainly now insist. As religion consists not merely in abstract dogmas, but mainly in life and action, it is taught more impressively by exemplification, than by mere definition and description. What a chart or a model is, in illustrating and enforcing many secular instructions, a complete holy life is to the teachings of Christianity. If Christians would manifest to the world all the excellencies of religion, they might be "epistles of Christ, known and read of all men." And hereby the preaching of the Gospel, and the other means of grace, would be clothed with amazing additional

power. Such a practical illustration of Christianity by all its professors, is the great desideratum. If it were supplied, there is no calculating how much more rapid would be the progress of Gospel grace.

Here, then, is a vast mission field, in which Christians, old and young, rich and poor, high and low, learned and illiterate, may at all times labor for the salvation of others. It is a field, too, in which they *need* not, and, if faithful, *will* not labor in vain. They can by their holy, lovely example, be always presenting some silent appeal to the impenitent in behalf of religion. And at last, when they can do nothing else, they can show by their patient, cheerful sufferings, how excellent is that religion which sustains and cheers them in their sufferings and sorrows. Especially can they show it in death, that most trying of all earth's trying scenes. How many a resigned, rejoicing, triumphant saint, on his death-bed, has thus carried a conviction of the truth and necessity of religion to the hearts of unbelievers, a conviction resulting in salvation.

It may not be amiss to remark in this place, that when the holy example of God's people

has failed to secure the *conversion* of sinners, it has been far from lost upon them. For it has done much for their temporal welfare. Christianity did much to stay the ruin of the Roman Empire, and to break the force of its final fall. It tamed into civilized life the fierce barbarians of the north who overwhelmed it. Christianity has done more than everything else to restrain the cannibal from feasting on his fellow ; and more than everything else to lessen the prevalence and cruelty of war. Christianity has done more than everything else to elevate woman toward her proper position in society. In nearly every nation and tribe, except where the Bible is felt, woman is at best but the servant of man—unenlightened, oppressed, and in some countries degraded almost to a level with the brute. It is Christianity alone that banishes those horrid heathenish atrocities of drowning infants, burning widows, and leaving aged parents to perish with hunger in the wilderness. It is Christianity, too, that has founded all the hospitals and houses of mercy that are found on the face of the globe. And the first voluntary contribution that is known to have been taken up in

heathen lands, was made by the christian converts of Macedon, for the poor saints in Jerusalem. It is well ascertained, also, that a great share of wholesome legislation, and wholesome moral habits of christian lands, is the result of religious example on legislators, and citizens who are still unconverted.

As, then, a good, pious example is so powerful for the temporal good of the impenitent, it is vastly important that all Christians should carefully cultivate, and clearly exhibit, all that is lovely and laudable in their religion, that they may accomplish all the good they can in that direction. Even if they could do no more good in that way, than to increase justice, propriety and kindness among men, it would be worth their utmost efforts; for they might thereby contribute much to the present happiness of the human family. But such an influence ends not here. Reformation in morals tends to repentance unto life. The more fully and habitually a man complies with the rules of christian morality, the more he will be disposed to hear the Gospel, and to be benefitted by it. How momentous in this view, then, is the influence, direct and indirect, of a high and holy example.

Rev. Mr. Ellis reported lately to the London Missionary Society concerning the conduct of converts to Christianity in Madagascar, that "the influence of their spirit, their character and their conduct among the heathen around them, is far more powerful than the precepts of the Gospel which they believe. It is producing impressions upon the people far greater than it is possible for us to imagine." And if the christian graces of those so lately converted from gross heathenism have such a mighty influence upon their savage persecutors, what might be expected, if all God's people in civilized lands would exhibit to the moral and enlightened around them the like fidelity.

Here, then, we have a most powerful motive to faithfulness in duty, and one too seldom insisted on. It is the good that is thereby done to the cause of man's salvation. When debating with ourselves, therefore, whether we shall omit any act, we should inquire not only, is it commanded? or will it benefit ourselves? but *is it needful to recommend our religion to others?* And as there is an unspeakable satisfaction in being instrumental in saving men from final wrath, and securing them eternal

bliss, it surely should be an effectual motive to cultivate and exhibit to the utmost all the christian graces. Let us resolve, then, to be ruled by this motive for the rest of life. And "turning many to righteousness," may we "shine as the stars forever and ever."

CHAPTER III.

SHOWING IT TO BE BOTH THE DUTY AND THE PRIVILEGE OF SINNERS, NO LESS THAN OF SAINTS, TO NOTICE, APPROVE, AND PRACTICE ALL THE VIRTUES AND GRACES OF THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

According to the method proposed at the commencement of this essay, we have yet to show that sinners, no less than saints, should examine Christianity so thoroughly and candidly, as to be fully convinced of its beauty and loveliness ; and should thence be persuaded to embrace and practice it, thereby securing salvation. And we would be the more earnest in the attempt, as we know our impenitent readers have a strong native aversion to the

subject, making them very loth to give it a faithful and honest examination. For notwithstanding this reluctance of theirs, we still wish to convince them that religion is not only infinitely important as regards the life to come, but that it is most lovely and delightful, and would afford them far more happiness in this world than they can otherwise enjoy. And that we may do it the more effectively, we would speak to them in direct address.

Dear fellow sinners, we are conscious from our inmost heart, that in what we are about to say to you, we have no other object in view than your highest good, both in the present and the future world. We have once been as fully fixed in the opinion, that religion is odious, degrading, and at war with man's happiness in this life, as any of you now are. But we have been convinced of our mistake, convinced not merely by argument and observation, but by happy experience. And we now desire to convince you of the same, only for your present and future good. We have seen from its very nature, from its effects on ourselves and others, as well as from the Word of God, that religion cannot but be beautiful, lovely,

and delightful, conferring on its votary beauty instead of deformity, honor instead of disgrace, and great enjoyment instead of unhappiness. We lament, therefore, to have you cheat yourselves of these benefits any longer: the more so, as you thereby expose yourselves to final and eternal woe. Will you not, then, at least for a little season, suspend your previous prejudice, restrain your present enmity to the religion of the Gospel, and "Stand still, that we may reason with you?" We would urge you,

1. *To a more thorough and candid examination of the nature, character and tendency of Christianity, that you may judge more accurately whether they are or are not what the Bible and Christians declare them to be.* Nothing can be more reasonable than the command, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."—1 Thess. 5: 21. Candor in judging of the moral conduct of others is evidently the duty of all. On your acting an honorable, upright part, you would feel that others should accord to you their approbation and praise; and would feel much aggrieved if they condemned you without duly examining your conduct. Much more would you complain, if they

persisted in doing so, while you offered to prove to them the correctness and excellency of your conduct in the case. Remember, then, the "Golden Rule," that requires you to act towards others as you would rightly require them to act toward you.

But you should deal kindly and truly with *yourselves*, as well as with the people of God. And even if you positively *knew* that piety would mar your present happiness and reputation as much as you now fear, it would still be most unwise in you to delay repentance and faith on that account. For you would thus expose yourselves the more to final woe. But how much more unwise to do thus, while, to say the least, you do not know that it would thus injure you; and while you know not but it would confer on you all the enjoyment and honor which the Bible and the saints affirm. We therefore entreat you not to persist in condemning and rejecting religion without a more thorough examination. We beg of you not to resolve on neglecting salvation, until at least you have fully and candidly investigated the alledged proofs that piety will make you more respected and happy than you ever yet have

been. And we do it with the more earnestness and confidence, because we verily believe that, if you will examine the point with due faithfulness and honesty to yourselves, you must be convinced that religion, instead of disgracing you, would "crown you with glory and honor" in the present life, and lead you in the life to come to "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory:" and that instead of making you more wretched in this life, it would render you far more happy than you can be in sin, and would finally secure you a "fullness of joy" in the presence of God, "and at his right hand the pleasures forever more."

But perhaps you will insist that you *have* investigated the subject sufficiently already, and yet are unconvinced. You say, it may be; that you have read the first chapter of this work, and yet fail to see that religion is as beautiful and lovely, and as well adapted to promote esteem and happiness, as it is there contended. Excuse us, then, if we say your failure must be owing to the unthoroughness of your examination, or to your unwillingness to be convinced. For, we must think there is enough in the chapter, and more than enough

to convince any candid mind, that the graces and virtues of Christianity are "worthy of all acceptance." But

"A man convinced *against his will*,
Remains an unbeliever still."

We are confident, therefore, that either you have not been thorough in your investigation of the chapter, or that you have been *unwilling* to be convinced by the statements and the arguments which it contains. When we penned them, though they appeared perfectly clear and conclusive to ourselves, we did not expect they would convince you *on a single and slight perusal*, since you are so much attached to your present notions on the subject, and consequently so unwilling to find them wrong. We are constrained, therefore, to urge upon you a more thorough and faithful examination, without allowing your past prejudices, or your unwillingness to see your past error, to restrain your search, to blind your eyes, or to bias your judgment. And you must perceive that this is your safest, wisest course. For even if our alledged reasons are insufficient, a closer inspection of them will but make their insufficiency the more apparent. Whereas, if they

are valid, it will avail you nothing to deny or disbelieve them. And if, after such a faithful investigation, you do really find that religion is neither amiable or excellent, true or needful, you can neglect it with the greater safety. Even in that case, then, your faithful search will do you good instead of harm. Whereas, if religion is what it claims to be, that is, infinitely excellent, and infinitely needful, it is unspeakably dangerous for you to fail to discover it, since it must expose you to final and endless ruin. As then, in either case, a faithful examination would do you good, and in one case would be of infinite importance to you, why not make it at once?

But perhaps you will insist that you have been not only *thorough*, but sufficiently candid, in your former investigations of this subject. You will deny, perhaps, that prejudice or evil propensities have influenced you unduly. Yet did you not commence the work with the *desire*, and also with the *expectation*, of finding religion unworthy of your love, and unnecessary to your welfare? We strongly suspect you did. And, if it were so, it is not strange that this inclination of your heart

should have kept you from dwelling, as fully as you ought, on the evidences of religion's excellence, and thus from being duly impressed by them. It is no wonder, then, if it warped your mind throughout your inquiry, and brought you to the conclusion which you expected and desired. To proceed safely, you need to guard very strenuously against such an influence.

We fear, too, that you may fail rightly to appreciate the christian graces, because of the deficiencies and the inconsistencies which you see, or think you see, in some professors of religion. For we know that many of the unconverted are ever eager to detect such imperfections. And we have been ever ready to confess, that many Christians are sadly deficient in completeness, consistency, and symmetry of character. But we must insist, nevertheless, that their faults furnish no excuse for you. Notwithstanding these faults of theirs, you may still see enough in them to convince you that religion is truly excellent and lovely. Instead, then, of giving your chief attention, as many do, to their *defects*, you should search mainly for their positive *virtues*; and reflect

that these are none the less amiable and precious in themselves, because they are found in company with some faults. For, again we say, *gold is gold*, though embedded in much quartz or sand. Remember, too, that when you spy imperfections in Christians, you only see their likeness to yourselves and to others who are unconverted; but that when you spy a real christian virtue in them, it is that of which you are destitute. And what of good you find in imperfect saints, is often to be the more esteemed, because their previous disposition and habits were very perverse; and it has cost them a severe contest with the remains of their evil propensities, to put forth such good fruits as you now behold in them. For such a resistance they should have your applause.

We confess, too, that there are many false professors in the Church, in whom *no* real good can be seen. But you must not conclude from this that *all* are such; much less, that all religion is false and worthless. For hypocrisy no more proves that all religion is worthless, than counterfeit coins are proof that none are genuine. The old proverb, that "hypocrisy is a tribute which vice pays to virtue," is as true

as it is trite. For who would profess piety if it had no real worth. What if you find imperfect and even false professors in the Church? It is no more than the Word of God has taught you to expect. Out of the twelve apostles of our Lord, one was a traitor. And would you impute the treachery of Judas to all his fellow disciples? Or would you insist that all professors of religion are void of moral excellence, because you saw some few of them as far astray as David and Peter?

Nor are you dependent on these imperfect ones for examples of the lovely and the beautiful and the lofty in religion. For many are "walking in all the commandments of the Lord blameless," leading such correct and holy lives that others "have no evil thing to say of them." That there are such faithful professors of godliness, many an unrenewed man has been ready to admit. If you have not yet found them, you *can* find them by a little candid search. And some of you can find them among your nearest relatives and dearest friends: relatives and friends whom you virtually slander every time you condemn religion. It is to these more faithful disciples of Christ that you should look,

if you would judge correctly of the excellence of real Christianity. To see it in its full, essential purity and excellence, however, you must contemplate it as it is described in the Word of God, and as manifested in the example of his perfect Son.

How can you imagine that you have given the characteristics of the christian religion a full examination, and have come therefrom to a candid conclusion that it is unworthy of your approval and adoption, when there is so much on the very face of this religion to show the contrary? How can you honestly say you find nothing commendable in the conduct of real Christians—nothing in their love of a God of infinite loveliness, nothing in their gratitude to Him from whom “cometh every good and perfect gift,” nothing in their reverence for a God of infinite majesty and power, nothing in their fear of a God denouncing “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil,” nothing in their joy at being delivered from these evils, with their prospect of a “fullness of joy, and of pleasures forever more at his right hand?” Can you believe that universal love to man is

no better than hatred to him? that honesty, truth and sincerity are no better than injustice and lying, insincerity and deception? that a confession of wrong doing, and a purpose to cease from it, is no better than self-justification, and persistence in the evil? that humility, patience and submission, are no better than pride, fretfulness and rebellion? that charity and meekness, pity and mercy, forgiveness and beneficence to enemies, are no better than selfishness and avarice, censoriousness and cruelty, malignity and revenge? And can you think there is nothing but weakness, meanness and disgrace, attached to a religion which has reformed so many drunkards and debauchees, and so many who were addicted to profaneness, dishonesty, and kindred vices; and which has done so much to civilize and enlighten, to elevate and refine so many ignorant and rude and barbarous nations? Forgive us for saying, you cannot intelligibly and honestly believe what is so evidently untrue. And forgive us, too, if we are unwilling to have you persist in such a ruinous belief, either through ignorance or the want of candor.

Perhaps you deceive yourselves by reason

of your original aversion to the duties of religion. Perhaps when you contemplate its graces and virtues, you are conscious that you would dislike yourselves to *practice* them; and mistake this morbid distaste of your hearts for a decision of your understanding, that religion is in itself unlovely and undesirable. Or perhaps, when you see others discharging religious duties, the contemplation is painful to you, because you are conscious that these are duties which you *ought* to have done, and have not done them. And the pain thus occasioned, you regard as evidence that religion tends in practice to make men unhappy. Whereas, it is not the *possession* and *practice* of it that occasions your pain, but the conscious *destitution* of it. If you saw these duties discharged by others in circumstances that did not stir up your aversion to the *practice* of them, or your guilt in neglecting them, you would instinctively pronounce them beautiful and lovely. Beware, then, how you deceive yourselves in this way. Remember, the most foolish of all delusions is *self-delusion*. And the most fatal of all self-delusion is in regard to the interest of the soul. Denying the importance of religion will do

you no good. You are safe only in acknowledging its worth, and at once accepting it.

There are some Christians to whom you must be much attached. And do you regard the religious graces of such as real blemishes? Does it disgust you to see your honored father, your beloved mother, wife, sister or daughter, showing themselves benevolent and patient, meek and self-denying, merciful and forgiving, when these graces of theirs cost *you* nothing, and when they do not remind you of your obligation to exercise the same? Many an impenitent man, nay, many a decided infidel, is avowedly anxious to secure a pious woman in preference to others, as a companion for life. But why this, if religion be not amiable, excellent, and "profitable unto men?" We knew an avowed infidel of twenty years standing, a man of intellect, and the most influential of any in the community where he lived, who manifested great interest in a revival of religion, *only*, as he told us, *because he hoped it would be of great benefit to his wife and children*. It is true, that soon after this, he became a Christian himself. But he was led to seek salvation, as he afterwards confessed to

us, by reflecting on his own inconsistency in seeking religion for his family, and not for himself. He was brought to the conclusion, that if his wife and children needed to be born again, he needed the same grace also. He therefore sought and found it. And would to God the same conclusion and the same results might be reached by all our infidel readers.

In concluding our arguments on this point, we ask, whether they are not sufficient to convince you of the rashness and danger of concluding, without a fuller and fairer examination, that religion is unworthy of your acceptance? and whether you will not resolve to give it immediately a more thorough and candid investigation? For sure we are, that if you still doubt its truth, its excellence and importance, it will be to your infinite peril, if you refuse it a re-examination.

But many of the impenitent are free to acknowledge, that true Christianity is in all its features really lovely and beautiful, while they yet remain as far from piety in their affections and conduct as ever. And such may be the fact with some of you. Not a few of those who make such concessions, are not very hearty

in them. Some speak thus in its favor for the sake of securing the good opinion of Christians; or because they have not the hardihood to avow and to defend their real opinion on the point. But we hope the most of them, and yourselves especially, are really convinced, *speculatively*, that religion must be in itself amiable and excellent, and tends to elevate and refine, to honor and bless all her faithful votaries. Yet we are not satisfied with the cold conviction of your understandings. We ask the concurrence of your hearts. We therefore urge you,

2. *To yield the approbation of your heart* to all that loveliness and beauty, excellence and importance of religion, of which your *understanding is convinced*. And is not this a reasonable request? Ought you not to love what you see to be lovely, to admire what you see to be beautiful and admirable, and to desire what you see is useful and infinitely needful? *Have* you already yielded this cordial love of approbation and moral esteem? If you have, you are "not far from the kingdom of heaven." But "salvation is far from the wicked." And as you are avowedly living in

sin, we must think you have not yet accorded to them the devotion of your hearts. Nor will you deny your lack of this duty, unless you confound the admission of your intellects with the consent of your hearts. But you must see that it is one thing to be convinced of a duty, and another thing to discharge it. And why is not this duty actually done by you? Will you plead inability? Will you insist that your mind is so formed, or rather so *deformed*, that it cannot flow out in love to what is good and amiable, nor in admiration of what is beautiful and grand, nor in desire after what is vastly important to your present and future welfare? You can love, esteem, and desire what is amiable, excellent and needful in things temporal; why not, then, in things spiritual and eternal? There can be no difficulty in the way of your approving of religion from your hearts, except a previous disposition which you must see to be perverse and wrong. Nor can a wrong inclination justify you in not acting right. And while you have no sufficient excuse for neglecting this duty, you have most powerful reasons for discharging it heartily, and without delay. So long as you neglect it, you

live devoid of the radical, all-essential grace of that religion which brings salvation, that is *love*. As this religion consists so largely in love, and results so largely from it, in other words, as it consists mainly in loving God, his Son, his people, and his laws ; and as so many of its duties must be prompted by such love, it follows, that, if you continue your heartfelt aversion to it, you cannot be saved. For the Psalmist says, "The Lord preserveth all that *love* him, *but* all the wicked will he destroy."—Ps. 145 : 20. Paul says, "If any man *love* not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maranatha."—1 Cor. 16 : 22. While another apostle says, "He that *loveth* not his brother, abideth in death."—1 John 3 : 14. And you must be conscious, on looking within, that however your judgment is convinced that religion is comely and excellent, you still have a cordial dislike to it ; and that it is this aversion of heart that hinders your embracing it "to the saving of the soul." This dislike, then, must be surrendered, or you cannot be saved. And thus you see, that reasons weighty as eternal woe, and as everlasting bliss, are now urging you to overcome this irrational aversion to

what is evidently amiable and excellent, of good report, and of infinite moment.

Some of you who are theoretically convinced of the beauty and value of religion, are beginning, perhaps, to see the guilt and danger of not giving it the concurrence of your hearts. And you ask, it may be, by *what means* this inveterate aversion of yours is to be overcome? We reply, therefore, that it *ought* to be overcome immediately, and *without* means. You ought to cease at once from hating what is so evidently lovely, and from disregarding what is so immensely important. You ought forthwith to love and heed them with all your heart. This obligation would doubtless be affirmed by your conscience, if you would but let it speak. But it is to be feared that you will not "cease to do evil" thus immediately. We will, therefore, suggest to you certain means, which may lead you eventually to the duty which you are now so reluctant to perform.

The first means which we would urge, is a full internal acknowledgment of your *obligation* to love and regard religion. There is no prospect of your doing the duty, so long as you are trying to justify yourselves in neg-

lecting it, nor so long as you think little or nothing about it. So long as these continue, they will effectually prevent the discharge of it. But the more you allow your conscience to proclaim aloud your obligation, the greater the probability that you will comply with it.

Another means which we would mention is, that you dwell with continuous and concentrated attention on the *importance* of giving to religion the immediate and full approbation of your hearts, and on the infinite *danger* of failing to do so. Your native dislike to christian duties makes you averse not only to embrace and practice religion, but also to *think* about it. You are, therefore, in the more danger of being thoughtless and indifferent about it. Instead, then, of forgetting your critical condition, or of striving to quiet your fears, you should strive to rouse and augment them. You should hold up before your minds the immense interests which you have at stake, and solemnly consider how much they are endangered by the opposition of your hearts to the only way of salvation. It is thus that you should urge yourself to relinquish your unfounded and dangerous aversion, and thus re-

move the main obstacle to saving faith, and repentance unto life. This is one means by which God is striving, through his Word, his Providence and his Spirit, to persuade the unconverted to "turn and live." Instead, then, of avoiding and resisting this means, as many do, and as probably you have hitherto done, you should not only welcome it, but impress it as much as possible upon your consciences, and continue to do so till it is effectual.

We have one more means to recommend. It is a more constant and intense contemplation of the various excellences of religion which we have heretofore considered. We will suppose you have heretofore examined them enough to be somewhat convinced that they are worthy of your heart's approbation. Yet your conviction is not as full and impressive as it needs to be, else your heart could not so easily repel it. For the more constant and thorough your conviction that religion should be loved and chosen by you, the more difficult will it be to reject it. You should, therefore, keep your mind intent upon its excellencies, till your heart yield its full approbation. For if this cordial approval is withheld, there is reason to fear

that the conviction of the understanding is some way deficient. Nor can you be said to have done all you can to overcome the aversion of your heart, till you have given this conviction of your understanding its utmost fullness and force.

But many profess cordially to approve, admire and love religion, while as yet they have not chosen it as the pursuit of their lives. And it is indeed true, that to love piety in the abstract, or as seen in the lives of others, is a very different thing from delighting to practice it ourselves. But it may be doubted whether these things do not always go together, however distinct they may be in themselves. For how can any one delight in the graces of Christianity in others, without choosing to possess them himself? Yet we will now suppose that *you* have the one without the other. We have therefore to urge upon you,

3. *The full adoption of the christian religion, the faithful exercise of its affections, and the faithful discharge of its duties.* This is the last, and by far the most important duty which we have proposed to press upon you. The others are but preparatory to this, and

would be of little avail if this were wanting. Nay, in one respect you would be far the worse for them. For the mere conviction of your intellect that religion is beautiful and lovely, and "profitable unto all things," and even a cordial love of it, as seen in others, will do you no good, unless they lead you to espouse and practice it yourselves; but will rather increase your guilt and condemnation, since in that case you will sin against greater light, and stronger motives, in rejecting salvation. And the duty of adopting and practicing religion is infinitely important, because, if you do so, you secure a life of happiness, and an eternity of bliss; while, if you do *not*, you will enjoy the less happiness in this life, and reap eternal woe at last. Why, then, should you neglect a duty of such infinite moment?

Once you disdained to become Christians for fear of disgrace and shame. You thought its affections mean, and its duties degrading. You therefore resolved, that rather than be thus disgraced, you would delay religion, though at the risk of foregoing infinite blessedness, and of "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." But now you profess to be convinced,

as you certainly ought to be, that religious affections are not mean and disreputable, but magnanimous and ennobling; and that a christian life is not base and despicable, but "lovely and of good report." What is there *now*, then, to hinder your becoming, by repentance and faith, the heirs of salvation? Why not enter at once into life, and begin to put forth those graces and virtues which, as you profess to believe, are lovely and beautiful, conferring worth and honor on all who possess them? Ah, we are afraid it is because that, after all your professions of believing religion honorable, you still have a lingering fear that it will disgrace you. Though convinced in the main that such fears are groundless, still they steal back upon you, perhaps, whenever you think of becoming a Christian. Or perhaps you will say, that though you believe religion to be lovely and laudable in others, you fear, nevertheless, that *your fellow sinners* will despise it in *you*. But if so, they must be in error on this subject, as you have been. And you should not confirm them in it, by showing them that you are still ashamed of Christianity, but should strive to convince them of their error,

both by example and arguments. Yet more probably they are only *pretending*, or *trying* to believe, that religion is mean and disgracing, while in their better judgment and their consciences they declare in its favor. If, then, you would espouse and advocate Christianity, they would probably be constrained, as many in like cases have been, to acknowledge that you have "chosen that *better* part," and perhaps choose it with you.

But what if some of your old associates would forsake and scorn you? It would be weak as well as wicked in you to be kept by the fear of it from doing either what your duty, or your highest interests requires to be done. Self-respect alone should set you above the false opinion of others. What more do you need to fix you on a pious course, than a conviction that you *ought* to pursue it, that it is the only way in which you can secure your utmost welfare in this life, and in the life to come; the way to render you more *deserving* of the respect and love of others, as well as the way that will lead you to glory and honor in the life to come? Would you decline a high station in life, in which you would be far

more respected by a far higher circle, because a few mistaken ones had a low opinion of that station? and when you knew that even these would soon see, that, by accepting it, you had secured a far higher dignity, and a far greater enjoyment, than you ever knew before? Yet much more egregious your folly, if you are deterred from salvation for fear of being despised by a few misjudging sinners. For you would thus continue in "sin," which is "a reproach unto any people," and which leads to shame and everlasting contempt—rather than become "the excellent of the earth"—rather than "choose the better part"—rather than practice the "wisdom" which "brings to honor them that embrace her," and finally adorns them with a crown of glory at God's right hand. What though you had to suffer reproach and shame through life, from all your impenitent friends, because you espouse religion? How much better that you should be congratulated by all heaven at your conversion, and should triumph in your glorification, than that you should be the derision of devils, and the ceaseless lamentation of saints and angels. But how much greater your folly in foregoing this

good, and incurring this evil, when you have no reason to fear that such disgrace would result from becoming Christians. You know very well that, as a general thing, those who were respected before their conversion, are respected none the less on being born again. And you know on the other hand, that multitudes who were debased and despised by reason of their ungodliness, have risen to respectability and moral worth by embracing religion. Who, then, can estimate the folly of continuing in the way to woe, for fear of being despised for escaping it?

But perhaps what makes you most loth to become Christians, is the fear that it would make you more *unhappy* in the present life. Yet you profess to believe that a life of piety is in its nature amiable and honorable. Why is it, then, that you can find no delight in it? Either your heart is deplorably corrupt, or your conviction of this beauty and excellence of religion is very defective. You only need, then, either to resist the influence of this corruption, or to gaze upon all that is laudable in religion, until you are compelled to love and delight in it. For if you were as fully, and as

impressively convinced of its excellency as you ought to be, it would seem that you must of necessity take pleasure in it.

You may think, however, that your present *experience* is a positive proof that you cannot be happy in the exercise and practice of piety. If so, you are grievously mistaken. Of true christian experience you have *none*. You know from experience how religion affects you as *sinner*s, while you only *look* upon it. But you know nothing from experience how religion would affect you if you were *Christians*, while *living* and *acting* as such. For you have not yet experienced a single gracious affection, nor done from christian motives one single duty. For "in your flesh," that is in your un-renewed heart, "dwelleth no good thing."—Rom. 7: 18. Nor can you know by experience how religion will affect your happiness, till you really *become* Christians, and live and act like Christians. And all who do become such, will tell you it is *their* experience, that the more faithful they are in the service of God, the more happy they are in the present life.

Yet all you mean, perhaps, is, that when you consider the affections which the Christian has

to exercise, and the duties which he has to discharge, it *seems* as if it would be very painful to *you* to do the same, because of your present strong dislike to all such affections and duties. And it is indeed true, that you cannot take pleasure in them as long as you continue to feel as you do now. And it is equally true, that you cannot have these affections, and do these duties, so long as you feel as *you do now*. In your conclusion, then, you have overleaped two important facts. One is, that your dislike of these affections and duties is not owing to their intrinsic odiousness, but to the perverseness and corruption of your hearts; that, if your hearts were as they ought to be, they would be led by your understanding, at once to loving, desiring, and delighting in, what you intellectually judged to be lovely and desirable. You would, therefore, take pleasure in pious exercises and duties, just as saints and angels do. And the other fact is, that every one, on becoming a Christian, is so “transformed by the renewing of his mind,”—Rom. 12 : 2, that “old things pass away, and all things become new.”—2 Cor. 5 : 17. The old aversion to holiness is gone, and is succeeded by a new relish, that

“hungers and thirsts after righteousness,” and “delights in the law of God after the inward man.”—Rom. 7: 22. The change thus wrought in regeneration is not only a *conversion*, but an *inversion*, turning both affection and conduct to an opposite direction. After his conversion the man hates and abhors those sins in which before he most delighted. And he loves and enjoys most of all things, the holy affections and services which previously he most detested. Previously he “hated God” his Son and his Sabbath, his Word and his worship, his law and his people. But now he “loves God with all his heart”—now “Christ is precious,” the “chiefest among ten thousand,” and “altogether lovely”—now the Word of God is “sweeter than honey or the honey comb;” for he delights in its precepts, and finds that “in keeping of them there is great reward”—now he finds it “good to draw near to God,” and that his happiest seasons are spent at the mercy seat—now he “calls the Sabbath a delight”—and now he “loves his brethren with a pure heart fervently.”

This change may be aptly illustrated by the restoration of a sick man to health and appe-

tite. During his disease, he loathes the very food for which in health he had the keenest relish. And it seems to him that he could never love it again. But when his health returns, his appetite returns. And what he loathed so much in sickness, he relishes most keenly when his health is restored. And you are now afflicted with the worst of diseases, the disease of sin. "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." No wonder, then, that you are disgusted at the holy food of angels. But if the Great Physician should lay his healing hand upon you, and restore you to spiritual health, you would love religion as much as you now dislike it; and would find it as delightful as you now think it painful. You must have seen that just such a transformation has been wrought in many. For you know that once they hated holiness as much as you, and feared as much as you that its exercise and practice would render them wretched. But since then, you have seen a striking change take place with them—a change which they and the Bible ascribe to the renewing grace of God—a change by which they have lost their delight in sin, and have found a far higher one in the ways

of holiness. And you know that the Almighty is able to effect the same blessed change in you. He *can* make you far more happy in his service, than you have been, or can be, in the service of Satan. And such a change he offers to effect in *you*, and in all who will repent, thus making the path of piety to be pleasantness and peace. Nor has he ever failed to do so with any returning sinner. You ought, therefore, to rely upon his power and readiness to do the same for you. Come at once to the resolution, then, to leave your sins and live a new life, assured that God for Christ's sake will not only forgive your sins, and eventually receive you to himself in glory, but will so entirely change your nature here, that you will be far more happy in his service on earth, than you ever have been heretofore in the service of the world, the flesh and the devil. As, then, there is evidently nothing to lose, and so much to gain, why will you hesitate?

Yet it is probable that the most of Gospel sinners are anxious only to escape the woe, and secure the bliss of the world to come. They are convinced that they must become Christians before they die, in order to shun the ever-

lasting agonies of "the second death," and to secure the fullness of joy, and the pleasures forever more among "the saints in light." And they intend to do so. But they determine to delay repentance and faith for the present, because they fear that religion would prevent their being happy in the present life. And if this is your impression and purpose, we beg of you to think of your inconsistency. You evidently hope to be happy in the holy service of God in heaven. But how can you suppose that the holy religion which is to make you happy in eternity, would make you miserable in time? If the scanty degree of piety to which men attain in this life, would render you wretched in time, how can you endure it in its fullness and perfection in the presence of God forever? Yet, again we say, even if it were true that a life of piety would make you as miserable as you fear, it would still be unspeakably unwise in you to delay on that account to secure your salvation at once, lest you fail of it forever. Infinitely better to endure all the unhappiness which you fear religion would occasion you, and to endure it through the longest mortal life, than run the risk of missing salva-

tion, and thus of lying down in everlasting woe. Besides, you know not how little of your life still remains. It may be that you have but a few days, or at most a few months remaining. What folly, then, to hazard your eternal welfare for the sake of securing, for such a short and uncertain season, the paltry pleasures of sin.

And yet some of you believe that you would lose nothing, either in respectability or enjoyment, but would gain much of both by embracing religion. And supposing you to have come to this conclusion truly and intelligently, as you certainly ought to have done, we would ask why you still delay to embrace it? You need to be enjoying these benefits *now*. Then why still forego them? Suppose you contemplated removing to some distant land, where you were assured of far more esteem and honor, and far more prosperity and happiness than you now enjoy; but that in order duly to enjoy these vast benefits, it were needful that you rid yourself of a deadly disease which is now preying upon you; and that unless you did so, you could not prosper, either here or in the land of your adoption. Would

you, in such a case, delay to use the means, or to take the medicine which would restore you to immediate health? If you knew, that just so soon as you applied the remedy, the disease, with all its pains and dangers, would depart, and you would begin at once to share much of the blessedness that awaited you in your far off home, would you refuse to be well, till about to set out on your journey thither?—and that, too, though you knew not how soon you must start? Surely you would not. Why, then, will you continue to languish under the pains and pinings of spiritual leprosy, while by coming at once to Christ, you might be instantly healed, thereby securing much more happiness on earth, and infinitely more in heaven.

Thus is *loss* by delay a powerful argument against it. But the *danger* of it is far stronger. There is a fearful probability that, if you do not *now* become Christians, you *never* will. And it is the more fearful, if you are now rationally convinced that religion would not make you more despised and miserable, but more respectable and happy. Once you probably have said that you would willingly embrace religion, if it would not make you more

despised and unhappy. But *now* that objection is removed. And if now, when convinced that it will not injure, but promote your present welfare, you still refuse to embrace it, what probability that you ever will? What additional argument can be urged upon you?

Besides, the *present* is your only sure opportunity to secure salvation. For life is utterly uncertain. "You know not what a day may bring forth."—Prov. 27: 1. "Man also knoweth not his time: as the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time, when it falleth *suddenly* upon them."—Eccl. 9: 12. "For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them."—1 Thess. 5: 3. And this fact is confirmed by every day's occurrence. Nearly all men die to themselves unexpectedly. Nor have you any reason to expect it will be otherwise with you. If, then, you are very confident of living longer, the more is your danger of dying unprepared.

Nor is it the uncertainty of life alone that makes your delay of repentance most dangerous. Many things may happen to you here-

after, that will make it far more difficult than it now is to flee from final wrath. Though your lives should be prolonged, yet your present opportunities, conveniences, and means of grace may be gone forever. And if you are not willing to "lay hold on eternal life" at the present time, when your circumstances for doing so are most favorable, how can you be persuaded to do it when they are most *unfavorable*? You may soon be occupied and crowded with worldly cares and employments, that will make it more difficult for you to secure salvation. You may be removed from your present means of grace, and from your present pious associates, to scenes, employments and associations that will greatly obstruct your escape from the perdition of ungodly men. And what is frequent, and is far worse, your minds may become so weak, if not bewildered, or so distracted, if not destroyed, as to make it all but impossible for you to find and to enter the strait gate of life. When you see death near, you may be so distracted, like many in alarm at fires, as to do nothing right for your safety. A great share of sinners on a death-bed are totally bereft of reason, and so

are utterly incapable of making their peace with God. And how fearful the probability that it will be so with you. For since you will not improve your best opportunities and means of grace, why should they be continued to you any longer? Offended at your neglect of them, why should not God remove them at once and forever?

Or, though your favorable circumstances for securing salvation should be continued, and your minds remain unimpaired, still you may provoke the Lord to recall from you that blessed Spirit by which you must be born again, or never enter the kingdom of God.—John 3: 5. He says, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.”—Gen. 6: 3. And since he has done so much to provide for you the supper of salvation, done so much to facilitate your approach to it, and so long called and urged you to come, you have reason to fear, that if you refuse any longer, he will say of you, “None of these men that were bidden shall taste of my supper.”—Luke 14: 24; and “swear in his wrath that you shall never enter into his rest.”—Ps. 95: 11. It is confidently believed, that from many who have been fully

convinced of their sin and danger, as you probably have been, and yet refuse to give up their sins, he recalls his Spirit, saying, "They are joined to their idols, let them alone."—Hos. 4: 17. And thus we believe he leaves them to die in their sins—some in utter stupidity, some in deep distress or sullen gloom—and others raging and blaspheming. All of them having been "often reproved," and having "hardened their neck," are "suddenly destroyed, and that without remedy."—Prov. 29: 1.

It is a fearful fact, too, that all those sinners who believe in the final doom of the wicked, *intend*, just as you do, to repent *hereafter*, while a vast portion of them fail to fulfill their resolution, and therefore "go into perdition." And if you persist any longer in the like resolution, the awful probability is that you will meet the same dreadful doom. This fatal resolution ruined them, and what is there in your case to prevent the same resolution from ruining you also? Precisely nothing. It was this resolution, and this consequent hope of repenting at some *indefinite future time*, which encouraged them to this fatal delay. And

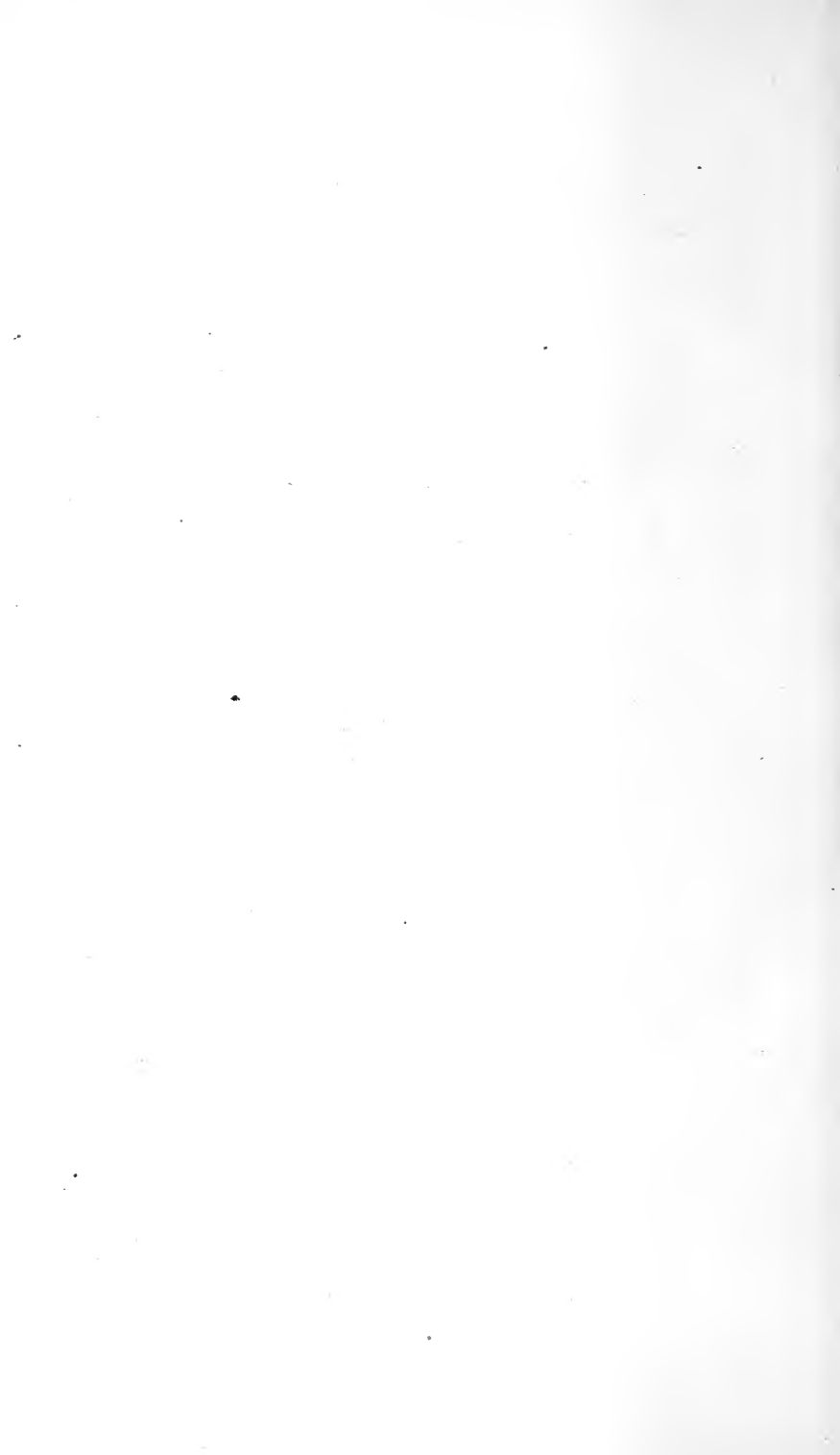
toward that same final pitfall they are now leading *you*. A purpose and a hope to secure salvation *hereafter*, is only an inducement and an encouragement to refuse it *now*. And you have only to cling to that purpose and hope a little longer, to make your "damnation sure." Nor will you have less reason or less inclination to hold on to it than you have at the present time. If there is any good reason for giving it up *hereafter*, it is equally good for giving it up without delay. And the more confidently you purpose and *hope* to repent and believe at *some future time*, the more you will be encouraged to delay, and the more hopeless, therefore, your prospect becomes. A vast proportion of the multitudes that have gone down to hell from under the light of the Gospel, have gone there through the deadly influence of this very hope. Once they were standing where you stand *now*—fully intending, and fully expecting, as you now do, to be saved; and for the same reason, namely, because they were so firmly resolved to repent at some future time. You can easily conceive their grievous lamentation over this resolution of delay. How bitterly they will curse forever

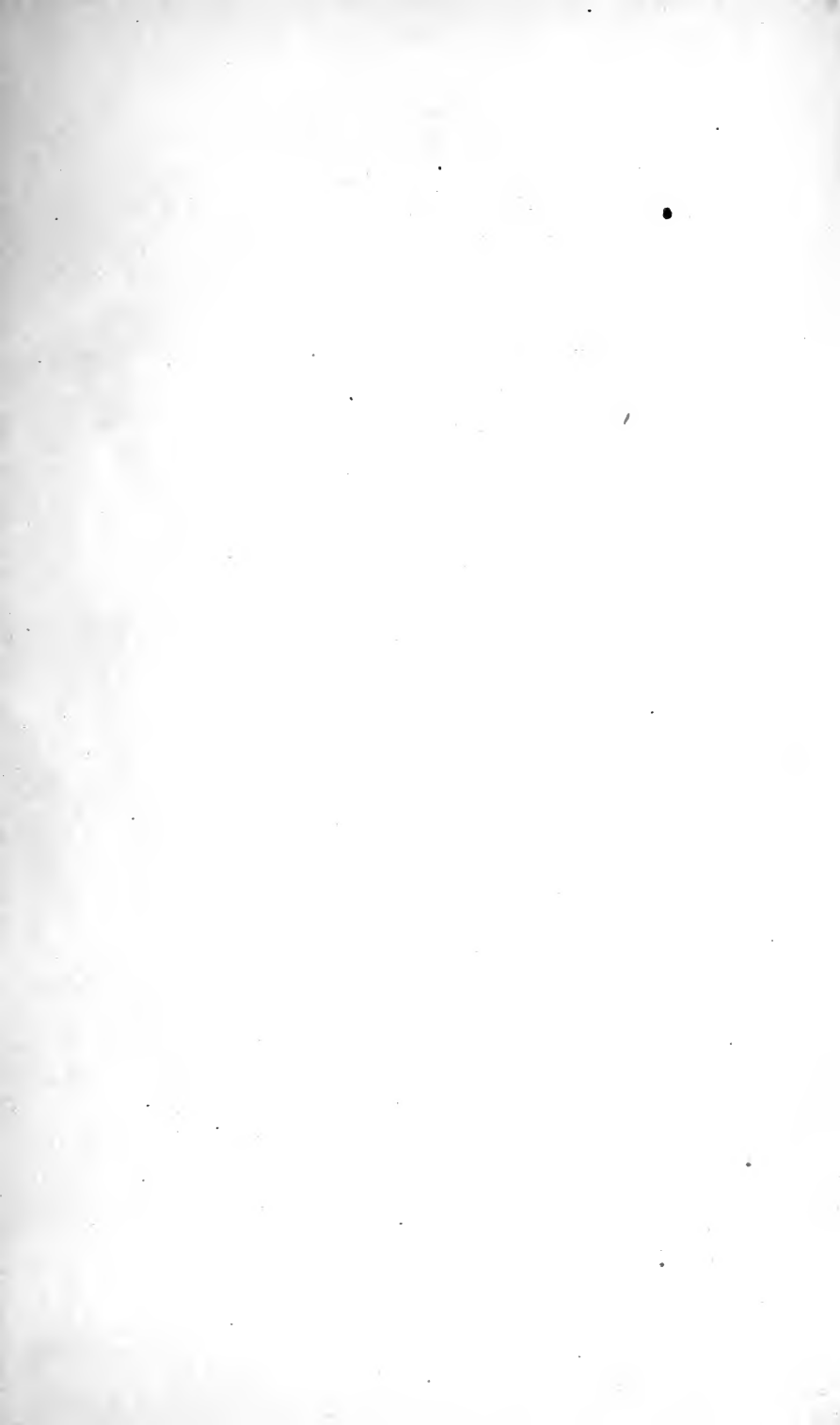
their folly in not resolving to repent at once, and thus have escaped everlasting woe. Why, then, will you follow them in the same road to ruin, when the fearful probability is that it will lead you to "mourn at the last," and to lift up your voices with them in unavailing and everlasting lamentation over the folly of delay? And as all who find salvation rejoice ever after that they sought it so soon, why will you not become at once the partakers of that joy? Why not come at once to that resolution which you will never regret, but over which you will always rejoice "with joy unspeakable and full of glory?"

Let all the arguments of this chapter be pressed in combined force upon your minds. As religion is so beautiful and lovely, so elevating and ennobling—and would add so much to your respectability and happiness in this life—as it is absolutely necessary to save you from eternal woe, and to secure to you eternal bliss—as the continuance of your lives is utterly uncertain—as your present means of grace, and your other conveniences for finding salvation may soon be removed—as your reason may be wrecked, or be otherwise grievously

obstructed or impaired—and as by refusing longer to accept of salvation, you may provoke the Lord to withdraw that influence of his Spirit, without which you can never be saved, will you not resolve before you lay this volume down, to break immediately “from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God?”

16
Nov. 15. 1861.







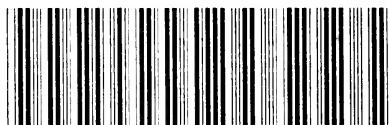
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